A Kaleidoscope of Diversity

Adventures in Bolivia • Leaving Kosovo

Youth and Spirituality • Japanese Girls' Day

Dr. King's Vision Today • Respecting All Life
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Skipping Stones is a nonprofit children’s magazine that encourages cooperation, creativity and celebration of cultural and linguistic diversity. We explore stewardship of the ecological and social webs that nurture us. We offer a unique forum for communication among children from different lands and backgrounds. Skipping Stones expands horizons in a playful, creative way. We seek suggestions, submissions, subscriptions and support.

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Happy New Year! Thanks to your support, we are beginning the 15th year of Skipping Stones.

As a child I remember making New Year’s resolutions. Sometimes it was to cultivate a desirable quality or to take early morning walks each day. Other times it was to quit an annoying habit, do something to be a better person or set a goal for myself. Do you make New Year’s resolutions? What are your resolutions for 2003?

At Skipping Stones, we are resolving to redouble our efforts to make this world a better home for everyone—not just for ourselves and our subscribers, but for all. We started by sending about 30 large boxes of books and magazines to schools and libraries in low-income communities throughout the world.

But that is not enough. We are taking on a much bigger challenge that may take years to attain. Our resolution is to make September 11th a National (and International) Day for Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue and Community Service. How will we do that? Of course, with your help! But why? How?

We hope to promote better understanding between people and communities. Fear, prejudice, racism, oppression and war have roots in lack of understanding and trust. When we know someone’s story, s/he is no longer a stranger. We can overcome our terror with fearlessness, turn prejudice into understanding.

Here in Eugene, Oregon, we have had ongoing events where people of many faiths and cultures get together and learn from each other. We share our opinions, experiences, customs and traditions. Some events are formal; others are very informal gatherings where we simply share a meal and get to know others a little better.

The Eugene Middle East Peace Group organized a joint Channukah and Eid-el-Fitr festival on December 7th. It brought together Jewish people, Muslims, Christians, Palestinians, Arabs and Israelis. Proceeds from the event benefitted Windows–Channels for Communication, an organization that publishes a Palestinian/Israeli youth magazine and hosts Jewish/Arab dialogue groups.

I have observed that when my seven-year-old son meets someone for the first time, he is shy. Do you feel awkward or fearful with people you don’t know? In early November, I was in the nation’s capital for a conference of the National Association for Multicultural Education. On public buses and trains and at the conference site, I met hundreds of “strangers.” In most cases we shared conversations and smiles. Not all of us became good friends, but we were no longer strangers.

You, too, could take on the challenge to meet a “stranger.” This could be a New Year’s resolution. Arrange small gatherings to get to know others at a deeper level—more than what music or clothes they like. Try to understand where they are coming from, what they believe in and why.

Then tell the readers of Skipping Stones about your experiences making friends, getting to know someone from a different culture, religion, nationality, language or ethnicity. Has getting to know them enriched your life? What did you learn? Tell us about your visits to another country or your encounters with someone in a wheelchair. Attend meetings of different spiritual groups and share your thought on the experience.

We will feature dozens of these enlightening encounters in our Sept.-Oct. issue. We hope that come September, thousands of communities will gather together and celebrate our unity in diversity. We will reflect on how different people can help make each of us and our world more peaceful, complete and fulfilled.
I would like to send our sincerest gratitude for your generous book donation. Because of the diligence of both staff and students, the Mashabela School Library will officially open in January 2003. We are currently decorating the walls, training student librarians and conducting story hour for lower primary learners.

Books are very special gifts indeed. These children now have the opportunity to explore the joys of reading. I have witnessed their interest and enthusiasm, and I can’t thank you enough!

I am planning lessons using articles and literary works from your magazine in order to encourage learners to have a firmer understanding of cultures and places.

—Tamara Johnson, Peace Corps volunteer, Pietersburg, South Africa.

No Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge!

Alternative Energy Sources

There has been a dispute in Congress lately about drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Oil is a limited resource, yet it is readily available and inexpensive for the average American. There are other energy sources that are less harmful to the environment and still beneficial to the economy. Drilling in ANWR is a shortsighted plan to meet the nation’s energy requirements.

Electric batteries are one alternative energy source. They can be recycled and only need a small amount of petroleum to be charged. Similarly, solar power could be used. The sun shines all year round in southern California, the major consumer of oil. Hydroelectric and wind power could also be used. These methods could be profitable. Companies could specialize in selling batteries or solar panels. The U.S. should pursue these less costly and more environmentally friendly alternatives.

The U.S. will eventually run out of oil anyway, so we should start finding other ways to get energy now. Convince your congressmen to take action. Send an e-mail today telling your representative what you think about destroying the beautiful Alaskan wilderness.

—Emma Schneiderman, 12, South Pasadena, Calif.

Looking Out for Wildlife

Many types of animals live in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, including caribou, polar bears, brown bears, moose, grey wolves, musk oxen and dall sheep. Drilling in Alaska would force many of these animals to relocate, which would be very dangerous to the species’ survival. The Gwich’in tribe that lives around ANWR believes that drilling would force the caribou to stop breeding and leave. They have hunted these animals throughout the ages and still do today. They fear that the ecosystem would change drastically if drilling occurred.

To drill in Alaska, Congress would have to cancel an existing law that preserves all national parks. By doing this no national park would be safe. The government would be able to drill or log wherever it wished. Should we obediently open the gates of national parks to logging trucks and drilling machines?

Cutting our energy use will help stop the immense need for oil. Will we doom this home for wildlife and this pinnacle of beauty because of our need to drive cars everywhere and keep our computers running all day? I hope not, but only together can we stop this horrific event from taking place.

—Annabel Beichman, 12, South Pasadena, Calif.
What's On Your Mind?

My father is an alcoholic. He is the youngest of four children. He grew up in a home where drinking was normal behavior. My mom grew up in the same neighborhood, and she says drinking was a part of everyday life at his house.

As I got older, I became more aware of my dad’s drinking. I began asking my mom questions about my dad’s drinking. I tried to explain to Mom that living with an alcoholic parent sometimes makes me feel confused, sad, mad, embarrassed and scared.

My mom took me to the library, and we got books about alcoholism. After reading stories about alcoholism in other families, it made me see that every family is different. However, when living with alcoholism, people seem to experience similar emotions. Reading books about children of alcoholics made me think of helpful ways to cope with my dad’s drinking. Now, when I am upset, I think of positive thoughts and actions. I call them my “helpful steps.”

I thought if I wrote a story about my experiences and my helpful steps, it would bring me comfort and strength to cope with my dad’s drinking. Maybe my helpful steps can bring comfort and strength to other children who have alcoholism in their family.

I feel confused after my mom and dad argue, which they do a lot when Dad drinks. I don’t want my mom to be angry with me if I talk and laugh with my dad, even though she is mad at him. I asked my mom if she would be angry. She explained to me that their arguing had nothing to do with my younger brother or me, and she would never be angry at us. She wants my dad and me to always be close. Even though Dad drinks, he loves me very much. I am lucky I can talk to Mom. My helpful steps I use when I feel confused are: I talk to people I trust. I try to remember that my dad’s drinking problem is not my fault, and only Dad can take control of his drinking. I tell myself I will always love my dad, and I will always be his best friend even though he

drinks. I also remember that Dad is going to be sober again, and we will have fun then.

What makes me feel sad is when my dad would rather have a drink than me. Sometimes we go out with our neighbors. All the other fathers go home with their families, but my dad stays out all night. I go to bed sad when he doesn’t come home. Another thing that makes me sad is that now and then he stops drinking, and I get hopeful. But a few days later, he returns to drinking. My helpful steps here are: I remember that Dad’s drinking is not my fault, and I sing, ride a bike, read, write and play with friends.

Once, while on vacation, my dad was drinking a lot. He stayed out all night. My mom packed our bags, and we secretly left. I felt sad for my mom, and I felt mad that my dad spoiled our vacation. Now I look forward to vacations with just my mom and brother. My dad’s drinking made me not want him there. I still love him a lot, but I would rather he not be around us when he is drinking. My helpful steps here are: I talk to my mom about what I would like to do on vacation, and we pick fun places to go and fun things to do. I really enjoy my vacations now.

My biggest fear about Dad’s drinking is that he’ll drive drunk and crash the car, harming himself and others. I don’t know why he drives drunk. My helpful step here is to pray a lot, hoping he will make it home safely.

My parents are now separated. Mom lets me see him whenever I want. Once she even heard me crying and called to ask him to come visit me. Thanks Mom! I still feel sad when I read that other parents have stopped drinking. But reading about alcoholism has helped me better understand that I cannot stop my dad’s drinking. The use of my helpful steps is the most important thing I can do to keep myself happy.

I will never stop hoping maybe someday my dad will get the help he needs to quit.

I love you, Dad.

—Lauren C., 9, Medford, Massachusetts.
Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
Applying his Vision Today

Even today, we can learn something from Martin Luther King Jr.’s messages of nearly 30 years ago. In Dr. King’s “A Time to Break the Silence” speech, he spoke not of heaven or God but of our problems here on Earth, particularly war. He wanted to teach us that we can enlighten ourselves by eliminating poverty, racism and militarism, but we will only drag ourselves into a pit of despair by allowing retaliation and hate to rule our lives. Can we really change the world? I believe we can, but only by listening to the messages spoken by our elders and looking long and hard at our mistakes from the past.

Why not act upon King’s words now? This is what we should dream of, and this is what we should put our efforts toward: a better place for every human, everywhere. So now let us turn toward the future, keep our minds open and take a step toward a new world.

—Roseann Proctor, Jefferson M.S., Eugene, Oregon.

Do I hear King’s words? Yes, I hear them with power and strength. “We can come together and say ‘no more.’”

As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “We are called to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for the victims of our nation (and other nations), for those it calls ‘enemy,’ for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers and sisters.” We can take the world under our wings.

“The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever-rising tides of hate.” Well, we can surf the oceans of history and change the whole world.

I see a brighter, better world out there that we can grasp with the hands of America. Hate is evil’s brother. Why live in a world of violence? We have bombed Afghanistan for what Osama bin Laden has done, but King used passive resistance and saw the face of victory. I believe using his words and resisting violence will bring harmony. Can you hear freedom ring?

—Hannah Foster, 4th grade, Eugene, Oregon.

In his “Beyond Vietnam” speech, Dr. King said that we as a nation “must undergo a radical revaluation of values.” Dr. King’s concerns went beyond racism. He was worried that if the United States kept doing business in the same ways, life could never improve for the poor people of the U.S. and the world.

According to the World Bank and the United Nations, the U.S. makes up six percent of the world’s population and uses 40 percent of the world’s resources. The U.S. is still continuing to be unfair to the rest of the world. We take advantage of workers in other countries who work for very little, just so the things we buy are inexpensive. Dr. King wanted us to “shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society.”

Many people in the Eugene area are trying to change things. People here take advantage of recycling to reduce the mounds of trash. A lot of people in Eugene protest and boycott Nike and other companies that take advantage of paying their workers low wages. Organic foods are more and more available for people to choose. Also the city of Eugene has bike lanes on almost all the main streets so people can use alternative transportation.

Individuals can make a small impact, but in order to make a big impact, we need a lot of people to make changes. To get lots of people motivated, we need another great leader like Dr. King. When will we find this leader? In 2003?

—Keenan Keeley, 8th grade, Eugene, Oregon.
Well, Dr. King, your dream has come true, sort of... Your four little children are still judged, but not by the color of their skin or the content of their character. Now they are judged by their life style or the language they speak. So what can we do to decrease violence?

Martin Luther King Jr. didn't just lead the civil rights movement for African Americans, he also inspired many other peaceful protesters. His legacy of non-violence lives on in many of us. These days I hear about Mexican Americans planning sit-ins, and I see gay rights marches on the news. These kinds of protests are based on King's model.

We have come a long way, but we still haven't overcome our bigotry. Did you know that every hour someone commits a hate crime? Did you know that every day eight blacks, three gays, three whites, three Jews and three Hispanics become victims of hate crimes? (Southern Poverty Law Center)

Have you ever heard anyone complain about how violent our culture is today? I have, but I also have seen that same person lash out at his or her children for the simplest thing. People don’t realize that to change the world, they have to start with a change in themselves. Violent big people make violent little people.

You can start to change by spending more time with your family, reading more and talking problems out instead of yelling. You would be amazed at what the little things can do.

—Rebecca Vaughn, 7th grade, Eugene, Oregon.

Dr. King's “Beyond Vietnam” speech reads as though it were presented last week on national television. “Even when pressed by the demands of inner-truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government’s policy, especially in time of war.” Measures that President Bush failed in passing earlier flew through Congress almost unanimously after September 11th. Once the hurdle of patriotism and the looming possibility of war presented themselves, members found it hard to turn down the president’s requests. War has rearranged our country’s priorities.

“...At least 20 casualties from American firepower for one Vietcong-inflicted injury.” A fact not widely broadcast via the media is that the death toll on September 11th has been surpassed by the total number of civilian deaths taken by American bombs in Afghanistan.

“History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursue this self-defeating path of war.” Similarly, the future looks bleak if we, as a global community, continue to take this path. Add in the increasing threat of nuclear weapons if war erupts, and the risk shoots up. We’ve already seen the danger of chemical weapons in the Anthrax scare, which hardly involved advanced methods and was by no means pursued as thoroughly as it could have been.

“America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can lead the way in this revolution.” America has not to any degree lost its hegemony over the rest of the world since the Vietnam era. Anything America wants to do and proceeds to pursue will be followed by the rest of the world to some degree. What if the United States had responded to terrorism differently? Let’s call a cease-fire on the world. As Dr. King said, “These are the times for real choices and not false ones. We are at the moment when our lives must be placed on the line if our nation is to survive its own folly.”

—Katy Bogart, 10th grade, Springfield, Oregon.

What lessons do you think the world has learned from Dr. King? Are racism and prejudice still present in your community? How can we move toward a nonviolent world? What are your leadership qualities?
George was a small, young elephant. George was abandoned when he was a baby because he was different. His family rejected him because he was blue. All the other elephants, none of which were blue, would tease him and would not play with him. One day George got up and left his herd to find someone who would love him for who he was.

After two months of wandering across the African plain, he was very lonely. While traveling through a small village in Uganda, he bumped into a man. The man was knocked off his feet by the little elephant and fell to the ground with a thump! George, who felt really badly, lifted his trunk and said, “Let me help you.”

The man, having never heard an elephant talk, fainted in shock. George remembered that humans didn’t know elephants could talk, nor did they know that elephants can be blue. George ran to a pond nearby and filled his trunk with water. Rushing back to the man, he spat. The force of the water blew the man’s toupee right off his head! The man awoke with surprise and screamed when he saw George.

George, wanting so badly to have a friend, blurted out, “Do you want to be my friend?”

The man, coming out of shock, saw an opportunity. He could make millions of dollars from this elephant. People would come from all around the world to see a talking blue elephant! “Sure, I’ll be your friend,” said the man. “Let me take you into town, and you can meet my friends.”

George was thrilled with his newfound friend. The man introduced himself as Chad. Chad led George into town, where he took him to a circus. Chad put George in a cage and started to yell, “Come one, come all to see the most amazing thing you have ever seen...George the blue elephant! Get your tickets here, only $5.”

George was amazed that people were coming to see him, and at first he really enjoyed the company. George started to feel bad, however, when people began pointing and laughing at him.

A little girl by the name of Sandy felt bad that George was locked up in a cage this way, and she ran off to report Chad to the police. The police came and arrested Chad and charged him with elephant napping of the second-to-last blue elephant in the world.

George was by now very scared and confused. The police took him to the local zoo. At the zoo, they introduced George to Georgia, the only other blue elephant in the world. George fell in love with Georgia, and they lived happily ever after.

And now there are four blue elephants in the world.


“George faces prejudice, rejection, greed and loneliness. Prejudice is a major problem in our society, and I wanted to bring attention to this growing problem. Even though someone may be surrounded by these problems, there is always a light at the end of the tunnel. In George’s case, it was finding true friendship and love. Everyone needs friendship and love to live a happy life.”
Respect for Life

There is nothing more important on Earth than life. That means that no one has the right to deprive any creature of life. We all must first respect our own lives and understand how we can protect and take care of ourselves. Then we can learn to respect all life on the planet.

Parents should teach children not to shoot birds or taunt cats and dogs. We should not break tree branches and flower petals. We should not pollute nature. This should be taught not only to children, but to adults too. People should not be allowed to leave garbage in the forest, and the extraction of oil in the seas should be stopped because it spoils the water and kills sea animals.

Every person should give life to something, for example, plant a tree, or save a stray puppy. These are the best things people can do in their lives for nature as well as for the soul. Everyone is born and dies. It is necessary to learn to respect this period between birth and death—it is very short. We need to remember that plants and animals are alive like us. What would I feel in its place, if somebody tried to kill or harm me?

To live in harmony with each other three things are needed. First, we should learn to understand nature. You can do this through communion with nature, for example, helping a plant or bird to survive. Next is respect for life. A person should conduct a healthy way of living without harmful habits, such as alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse. Finally, friendship makes peace. Friendship should not be only between a few friends, but between all nations. Friendship strengthens cooperation and harmony between all living creatures.

These three things will help us reach complete harmony in life—when human beings will merge with nature. I do my best to persuade my friends and neighbors (not only by words, but ultimately by my own deeds) to respect all forms of life, to understand and protect nature, to be friendly, tolerant and cooperative. I think that, first of all, it should be understood by us, the children, who will build and shape the future of our planet.

—Vitaly Ionesov, 15, Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

The Hidden Geode

The geode is gloomy and disheartening
Dull
Firm
Tough
It is stained and tainted
The geode is as crude as a newly started drawing.

The geode is captured by malicious thoughts
Stuck in misery
Always in disgrace
It is a circus performer ready to scare the crowd.

When opened, a geode releases an iron wrath of Goodness
Vivid shapes crowd your eyes
Glossy walls for investigation
Lustrous caverns shining brightly.

The geode teaches us that richness in appearance is not what counts,
But only value in the heart.

—Andrew Brown, 10, Mason, Michigan.

The Definition of Freedom

Freedom is the right to pick your religion without being persecuted for practicing it.
Freedom is to have your own opinion.
Freedom is to have the right to vote for your leaders.
Freedom is to have fair, just laws to follow.
Freedom is living in a place where race is no problem.
Freedom is living without fearing death or torture.
Freedom is living with a roof over your head.
Freedom is not being hungry or thirsty.
Freedom is going to sleep each night without any worry.
Freedom is to live your life to the best it can be each and every day.
Freedom is to live without crime, murder and disease.
Freedom is to not fear what tomorrow brings.
Freedom is the way you would like the world to be.

—Ryan Breen, 14, Gibsonia, Penn.
Towers
Tall towers with millions of windows,
Stand still along a wide river.
The windows make a second sun,
Which comes in the east
and leaves in the west.
A towering anthill with ants going,
Quietly and quickly in and out.
—Brendan Striegl, 9, Northbrook, Illinois.

The Ocean
I am known as the ocean
I have a lot in common
I am calm and peaceful at times
And other times I am fast and furious
I provide people with something to cherish
Cannot hold but can see
You might as well have named me
The Ocean.
—Jenine Sabot, 10, Airmont, NY.

Elements
I glance at you
Solemnly sitting in your pew.
You take the body.
You drink from the cup.
Do you really understand?
I glance at you
Whispering, bad-mouthing
The new kid in Sunday school
Sassing the teacher.
Did you really understand?
I glance at my soul
Judging you.
Am I really any better?
No
I took the Elements too.
Did I really understand?
—Emily Hopkins, 14, Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Night...
Paradise sought
Lost
Carelessness of waking up.
—Frankz Palacios, 16, and
Jesse Salvatierra, 16,
Los Angeles, California.

Mind Confusion
Mind Stumbling
On the clutter upstairs
Not wanting to clean
Wanting not to share
Keeping inside, one day to explode
This clutter upstairs
Mind in overload.
—Lindsey Miller, 10th grade,
Columbus, Ohio.

My Life Sketch
Life is not a simple
Scribble
It's a full-page sketch
ANGLE
CORNERS
show our
love, anger and trust
Kindness
is a fragile stroke
DECISIONS
as broad and bold as a line
limits
like the edge of a page
Problems
scarred in as eraser smudges
Solutions
an inspiration.
—Sam Pine, 10, Elmira Heights,
New York.
Delicate Temples of Sand

Can you imagine spending hours creating a complex picture out of sand, only to sweep it up when you are finished? Tibetan Buddhist monks use painstaking skill to create beautiful mandalas and then destroy them in a ceremony meant to help people find peace and healing.

Mandala is the Sanskrit word for circle. A Tibetan sand mandala is a symbolic depiction of a Buddhist temple. Mandalas usually include a series of circles and a rectangular temple with four gates facing north, south, east and west. Within this structure, monks draw ancient symbols and images of deities, which help observers understand their faith. Each mandala represents the teachings of a particular tantra, or spiritual way of life for Buddhists. There are many different mandalas, and each has its own symbols.

Traditionally, monks work together to create a mandala. The process includes sacred music and chants. The mandala begins to take shape as a chalk outline which monks fill in with combinations of white, black, blue, red, yellow and green sand. In ancient times they ground colored stones into powder, but today white stones are ground and then dyed with watercolors. Small metal funnels called "chakpu" help the monks pour the sand into place, creating highly detailed images. The process takes several days.

When the mandala is finished, the monks perform a closing ceremony and brush the sand into the center of the picture. Destroying their hard work is a symbol that life is not permanent. They take some of the sand to the nearest river and give some to the people attending the ceremony.

Buddhism teaches people to seek an ideal spiritual state called enlightenment, in which there is no suffering. Buddhists who attend a mandala ceremony believe that studying the mandala and its tantra will help them understand the universe and the best way to live in it. The designs within the mandalas are ancient, and their meaning is mysterious and complicated, even for the monks who create them.

Buddhist teachings and ceremonies are steeped in tradition. Sketches of mandalas are found in Tibetan texts from the eighth century. Today, some Tibetan monks travel the world performing mandala ceremonies to share Tibetan culture and to preserve their traditions. They sometimes create mandalas for museums and art galleries, which preserve the mandala.

You don’t have to be a Buddhist to enjoy the ancient beauty of mandalas. They inspire artists and spiritual seekers everywhere. If you can’t visit one in person, try looking for images of Tibetan sand mandalas on the internet. If you are fortunate enough to watch monks creating a mandala, be sure to see it before the delicate temple is swept away!

—Deb Baker, Concord, New Hampshire.

For more information check out:
• http://www.artnetwork.com/mandala
• http://www.graphics.cornell.edu/online/mandala
As the speaker welcomes us to Spain, I look around the room. Many students are gathered here with the shared purpose of learning Spanish and the Spanish culture. Looking at us you might think that we are young representatives to the United Nations. We’re not; we have just come here to live the Spanish experience. I am French, but most of the students are either Japanese or Swedish. Many other cultures are also represented.

As the days pass, I get to know my classmates better. I love hearing the two Norweigans speak, as it seems that they are just making random noises. The Swedes always try to find other Swedes; they speak in their native tongue or English. The Japanese are fun. They always try to speak Spanish, even among themselves. I start hanging out with them, and I become good friends with Yukari, Toshi, Kyoko and Minae. As we learn Spanish together, we compare our cultures. They explain to me how in Japan they go to regular school in the morning and to private school in the afternoon, for a better education and to pass the university’s entrance test. Minae works as a civil servant. When I tell her the workweek in France is 39 hours, she can’t believe it. She works almost twice as long, as do all the other Japanese. To them Spain feels like the vacation of a lifetime.

Each student lives differently. Some rent or share apartments. Others live with host families, paying for room and board. This way they can experience Spanish life. I rent a bedroom in someone’s apartment and have access to everything in the flat. It gives me more freedom. I can cook my own meals, yet I can also observe the Spanish way of life.


It surprises me to find out when they eat their meals. Lunch doesn’t happen until 2 or 3 p.m., and dinner is after 9 p.m. No wonder the streets
are still full of people long into the night.

I also find out that Spanish people are very lively, and they love to listen to the TV at its loudest. When the noises in the street die down, it's not uncommon to hear the TVs from other apartments.

Je découvre aussi que les espagnols sont bruyants et qu'ils adorent écouter la télévision très fort. Quand les bruits de la rue se calment, j'entends souvent les télévisions des autres appartements.

As colder nights arrive, I discover that there is no heating system. Curra, the lady I live with, explains that winter is too short to install anything. Instead they use a braséro, an electric heater that goes under the table, which is covered with a very long, thick tablecloth. People pull the tablecloth over their laps to benefit from the heat as they eat, talk or watch TV.

One Sunday afternoon, Minae invites a few students to participate in a Japanese tea ceremony. The simple process of tea with friends becomes so organized along precise rules that it really becomes a ceremony. We spend an afternoon comparing cultures. My friends describe Japanese. The bride has three gowns that she wears during the day, each of a different color. Unlike traditional Western wedding gowns they do not wear a white one. They show pictures of Japanese gardens.

Un dimanche après midi, Minae invite plusieurs étudiantes pour la cérémonie du thé japonais. Je suis étonnée qu'un événement aussi simple que de partager le thé avec des amies puisse être organisé selon de telles règles qu'il devienne vraiment une cérémonie. Nous passons l'après midi à comparer les coutumes de nos pays. Mes amies m'expliquent comment elles passent les mariages au Japon. La mariée à trois robes différentes qu'elle change pendant une journée, mais elle n'en a pas de blanche.

They also tell me how hard it is for them to take just a shower. They are used to taking baths and washing their long hair every day (which their host families don’t appreciate). I also learn that baseball and softball are very popular sports in Japan. I’ve never heard of softball, and I don’t even know how baseball is played. The popular sports in Spain are soccer and American football. The more we talk about Japan the more I want to visit there.

Elles nous montrent des photos de jardins japonais. Elles nous confient le mal qu'elles ont à ne prendre qu'un douche au lieu d'un bain dans lequel elles lavent leurs longs cheveux noirs que leurs familles d'accueil n'apprécient pas. J'apprends aussi que le baseball et le softball sont les sports populaires au Japon. Je n'ai jamais entendu parler du softball et n'ai aucune idée de la façon de jouer au baseball. Ici, les sports populaires sont le football et le football américain. Plus nous parlons du Japon, plus j'ai envie de le visiter.

During Christmas vacation, my Japanese friends experience the Spanish holiday season. Although they are Buddhists, some of them also celebrate Christmas. After the holidays, I move into an apartment with Kyoko. I love it when she cooks Japanese food. I even learn to eat with chopsticks! I try to learn Japanese but quickly give up, as I can’t even remember the easy words.

In May I return home. During the trip back to my homeland, I reflect on the wonderful experience of the past eight months. I have become interested in other cultures besides French and Spanish. Maybe England or the U.S. will be my next destination, and then I can add to my two culture enrichment.

En mai, je rentre à la maison. Pendant le voyage de retour, je pense aux huit mois qui s'achèvent. Je m'intéresse maintenant à des cultures autres que la française ou l'espagnole. Peut-être que l'Angleterre, ou les États-Unis seront ma prochaine destination pour ajouter à mes connaissances d'autres cultures.

—Sandrine Hope is now a freelance translator and writer, living in Prattville, Alabama, U.S.A.

Art by Valerie Summers, Altamonte Springs, FL.
Painters and Best Friends

“I learned to paint when I was 11,” says Tim Lucero, a serious and soft-spoken 16-year-old who lives in Bernalillo, New Mexico. “I was 10,” says 15-year-old Lorenzo Miera from the village of San Ysidro. Lorenzo has been Tim’s best friend since kindergarten.

Tim and Lorenzo recall riding their bikes after school to Lorenzo’s grandfather’s studio in Bernalillo. They spent hours watching Filimon Aguilar, a self-taught artist and retired hair stylist carve and paint religious figures. At the time, the boys were going through a very difficult period in their young lives. Tim had recently lost his father to cancer, and Lorenzo was coping with the loss of sight in one eye and juvenile arthritis.

“I knew my grandfather was getting his pieces ready to take to the Spanish Market in Santa Fe,” Lorenzo remembers. “I asked if I could go and help out at his booth. While I was there I took a break and wandered about the market where I saw beautiful paintings on wood panels called retablos. I decided then and there I wanted to paint, so I asked my grandfather if he would teach me.”

Tim, on the other hand, recalls reading “a fascinating book on New Mexico history that included a chapter on old retablos.” One day he rode his bike to Aguilar’s studio looking for Lorenzo and found his friend busy at work learning the techniques of retablo painting. Once Tim saw the process involved, he too was hooked on painting wood panels, just like his Spanish ancestors had done many, many years ago.

Aguilar taught his apprentices how to select, measure and cut the sugar pine wood. The boys also learned to sand the panels and prepare the wood for painting. Tim and Lorenzo still spend many hours under the guidance of their mentor researching the religious saints whose images they will draw and paint onto the wood panels. They grind pigments to make different colored paints and apply as many coats as needed on their detailed creations. The young artists paint in the Spanish colonial style, a style that is known for its simple broad curving strokes and outlined shapes. It is painted with natural pigments. Among their favorites are Our Lady of Guadalupe, Santiago, Santo Niño de Atocha, and the archangel San Miguel.

“Faces are the hardest to draw and paint,” say Tim and Lorenzo. The boys have been working hard to get different facial expressions and improve their skills. “We’re lucky to have such a good and patient teacher, too!”

Inspiration, the artists say, comes from each other, from Filimon, and from the other artists at the Spanish Market. They are also inspired by the old retablo paintings and santos found in New Mexico’s Catholic churches.

The Spanish Market is held in Santa Fe’s historic plaza every July and a similar version is held indoors in December. Tim and Lorenzo share a booth and exhibit their work every year at both markets. They usually sell all of their retablo paintings before noon on the first day. Their retablos have been purchased by museums, galleries and private collectors from around the world.

“Through our art we are keeping traditions alive,” say Tim and Lorenzo, painters and best friends.

—Katacha Diaz, Peruvian American, Davis, Calif.
My Mexican Blood

My ancestral background on my father’s side is Aztec Mexican. On my mother’s side I am European and Cherokee Indian. As a child with a mixed background, I have always followed my Mexican blood. What I mean is that I have followed the Mexican culture.

My favorite Mexican holiday is the day of Our Lady of Guadalupe. I love this holiday because she stands for the Mexican people. At church that day there are processions, mariachis and people dressed as Aztecs dancing for Our Lady of Guadalupe. Another special Mexican celebration is Los Reyes Magos. This day is based on the three kings that gave their gifts to Jesus in Bethlehem. On this day all children receive gifts. My last, but not least favorite Mexican holiday is El Día De Los Muertos. To Mexicans this is a very serious holiday. It’s the Day of the Dead. The purpose is to commemorate the people that we loved that have passed away. It is not supposed to be a sad day; it is supposed to be happy.

I love to go to Mexico. When I go to Mexico I feel like I belong there, but I also miss my home in the United States. In Mexico I have several family members that I enjoy visiting because they can’t visit me in the U.S. One of my favorite things to do in Mexico is to go by horse down to the river for a swim with my cousins. We usually go for a ride around noon and stay there all afternoon. I also like to go to the plazas. Not only is food sold in the plazas, but jewelry and hair accessories as well. Another thing I like to do in the summer is sit on the balcony and watch the colorful lightning flash in the sky. At night I sit on the roof and look at the stars.

Growing up as a Mexican American, I am fortunate to live in the Chicago area. There are many Mexicans in Chicago, which allows me to learn more about my heritage. There are Mexican restaurants, stores and bakeries. Most churches have bilingual masses and offer religious education in Spanish. I am proud to be a Mexican American, and I cherish my history and my supportive community.

—Alicia Ochoa, 13, Lincolnwood, Illinois.

Sobu’s Sister

One day in early spring a Japanese girl came down a short lane. She loved nature and loved dogs and cats. She was an artist. She had a brother named Sobu. Her name was Yomine. She had a paint set, and one day she got out her easel and painted a flower—a morning glory, perhaps. She painted a very pretty butterfly and a bird and the sun. Then she was finished. She was seven and a half years old.

One day she went to a museum. She brought her painting and said to the museum owner, “Here.”

He asked, “Did you draw this?”

“Yes, I did,” she said.

Ten people came to see her picture. She called it “Morning Gloria.”

“Mama and Pa will be so proud,” she said, “and Sobu too.” They were proud, and Yomine was too.

—Kara Buell, 7, Shelburne, VT
Kara studied Japanese culture in school and was inspired to create this story.
Dolls or a Valentine?

After the splendors of Christmas have faded, and the new year has started, Valentine’s Day is next to capture your attention. On the other side of the globe, in Japan, Valentine’s Day is only known for the chocolates which girls and women give to their male friends, a far cry from the original tradition.

However, Japanese children have a different day to look forward to—the Doll Festival, which is also called Girls’ Day and the Peach Festival because the peach blossoms are at their best around that time. On the calendar it is March third, an ordinary day for some people, but very special for girls. (Boys have their own day two months later.)

Mitsuko, a second-grader, is in a hurry on February fourth, a whole month ahead of the great day. She wants to be home when her mother takes the numerous boxes of dolls out of the closet. It is an annual ritual which started when she was one year old.

Depending on how well a family is doing, the dolls vary in size and quality, and there may be three, five or seven tiers on which they stand. Mitsuko has a full display of expensive, delicate porcelain dolls, a gift from her grandparents. In some families the dolls are handed down from mother to daughter over several generations. In others, a skilled mother may simply make the whole set of dolls out of colored paper, origami dolls, some of which are quite artistic.

Together with her mother, Mitsuko sets up the tiers, which are covered with red velvet. They fill half the room. (The rooms in a Japanese house are much smaller than those in an American house.) Next she frees the figurines from their wrappings. There are 15 of them: an emperor, an empress, court attendants and court musicians, all clad in ancient costumes. Mitsuko arranges them in order of rank on the tiers. The emperor and the empress in their rich brocade and lavishly embroidered silk garments are on the top.

There are some floor lamps too, a few blooming peach trees, musical instruments like drums and flutes, and several lacquered containers with sweets. Everything is exquisite and miniature like the objects in a doll house. Mitsuko places them as she sees fit. When everything is finished, she stands back a few steps to contemplate her work.

On March third, Mitsuko goes to school as usual. A rare dessert enriches the school lunch that day—a red and white bean jam bun. Red and white are the colors for happy celebrations. In art class, she learns how to fold an emperor and empress with a small piece of shining paper.

After class, the girls race home. Mitsuko invites her friends to a party. Soon the girls arrive, having exchanged their school uniforms for party dresses. They gather in front of the display; photographs are taken. Chatting and laughing, they munch on pink, diamond-shaped rice cakes made for this occasion. They drink amazake, a light, sweet rice wine, with the cakes. Only the elder children get a sip. Orange juice and green tea are also served.

Songs are sung and among them is a lullaby about this festival. You can hear it every year at this season in public places. Children learn it by kindergarten. It describes the dolls, one by one, and explains the purpose of the festival: to bring good health and happiness to the girls.

The merry celebration ends in the evening. Mitsuko gives the dolls one final look, bidding them goodbye. Tomorrow, when she comes back from school, they will already be packed up in their boxes and put away until next year.

—Katharina Okano, Chiba-Ken, Japan.
Art p. 16-17: Momoyo Kuwahara, Miyazaki, Japan.
Make Your Own Girls' Day Celebration!

Art Projects

The Japanese express their connection to nature through seasonal greetings and decorations for their homes. Cherry blossoms are the national flower of Japan. They are a symbol of the nation and are considered sacred.

Peach trees blossom first in very early spring in Japan and are used to decorate family alters and Girls’ Day celebrations. Momo-taro, a Japanese folk hero, was said to have been born on a peach pit.

- Create your own cherry or peach blossom branches by collecting tree branches and gluing popcorn to them.

    Ikebana, Japanese flower arranging. Ikebana is based on the less-is-more theory. Sometimes only one small branch is chosen. Most of the leaves are taken off, so the focus is on the tiny pink blossoms.

    Materials: jar lids, clay, various leaves, thin branches, flowers. Press the clay into the jar lid as a base for the Ikebana arrangement.

- Felt doll display. Cut out an emperor, an empress, musicians and ladies-in-waiting from felt and decorate.

    Kakejuku, Japanese banners. Color and decorate the O-Hima Sama (emperors) and glue them to the left side of the banner. On the right side, have the children write their names in Japanese.

    Materials: jar lids, clay, various leaves, thin branches, flowers. Press the clay into the jar lid as a base for the Ikebana arrangement.

- O-Hima Matsuri Mobile. Color and decorate O-Hima Sama, courtesans and musicians. Have the emperor and empress hanging at the top of the mobile attached to a dowel or hanger. The rest of the court hangs at different levels underneath

    Origami O-Hima Sama. Follow directions from an origami book or contact an origami society:

    The Origami Handbook by Rick Beech (Hermes House Publishing)
    Origami by Toyoaki Kawai (Japan Publications Trading Co.) ISBN: 4-586-54021-4
    Origami USA, 15 W. 77th St., NY, NY 10024

In the Kitchen

Visit a local oriental market and take advantage of the assortment of sweets and snacks found there, including rice crackers, o-manju (sweet dumplings) and steamed buns.

- Make onigiri, rice balls. Wash short-grain rice before cooking. Add rice vinegar to the cooked rice. While hot, squeeze cooked rice together to make small balls. Place a pickled plum in the center of each rice ball. Wrap in seaweed.

- Place a metal charm, like English pudding charms, in two o-manju, and the finders become emperor and empress for the day.

- Have a Japanese tea party.

    Materials: o-cha (green tea), Japanese teacups, snacks like rice crackers, o-manju and onigiri.

    Sit on the floor and have the snacks and tea on a tray also on the floor. Arrange snacks on small plates or bowls. In keeping with good Japanese manners, no one drinks before the host. Before beginning, everyone bows and says, “Itadakimasu,” (We are ready to begin eating.) When everyone is finished they say, “Go chiso sama deshita,” (Thank you for the food.) It is polite to bow while saying these expressions.

Music

Japanese CDs and tapes are available at music stores. “Sakura, Sakura” is a favorite Girls’ Day song.

Sakura, sakura
Noyamamo satomo
Miwatasu kagiri
Kasumi-ka kuno-ka asahi nio
Sakura, sakura hanazakari.

Cherry blossoms, cherry blossoms
All over the mountains and villages
All covered with beautiful cherry blossoms
Fragrance of the cherry blossoms are in the air
Like a mist or cloud at sunrise
Cherry blossoms, cherry blossoms
Full of cherry blossoms.

—Tracy Kanno, Cranston, Rhode Island.
Bouncing in a rickety, old bus along what my guidebook refers to as “the most dangerous road in the world,” I hazard a glance out the window. We are creeping along the edge of a precipice that is so deep I can see down until the trees become tiny dots shrouded by fog, but I can’t see the bottom. Our wheels are so close to the edge that the side of the road seems to disappear, leaving me to face the gaping drop into eternity. Instinctively, I gasp and sink down into my seat reciting prayers I hadn’t thought of since Sunday school.

Yet, still trembling with fear, I am back up for another peek a moment later. Even through my terror, I can recognize the most spectacular scenery I have ever witnessed.

This road is the only bus route from the city of La Paz high in the Andes Mountains to the lowland Department (state) of Beni. It climbs and dips its way through a region called the Yungas, which combines the sharp mountain features of the Andes with the layers of greenery from the lowlands. The Yungas feels like an enchanted prehistoric land and looks like an exotic movie scene with special effects, such as waterfalls surrounded by lush vegetation that appear out of the fog and cascade down the mountainside. The waterfalls are real, though, and sometimes actually fall on our bus as it passes beneath. Although it seems to me like
no one could live in such a remote, steep, cold place, we actually pass a few isolated villages and wandering llama herders along the way. Not in my wildest dreams could I have created such an experience, yet this adventure was only the beginning, a gateway, to a world of Bolivian adventures.

I spent my senior year of high school as an exchange student in the city of Santa Cruz, Bolivia. I explored the local area and culture with my host family, and I traveled much of the rest of the country on my own. Later, I returned to Bolivia as an anthropologist to live with indigenous people in the Amazon Basin. Even after a year and a half of exploring, I had only experienced a small slice of Bolivia’s rich cultural diversity and unique natural features.

Santa Cruz, my home base, is a tropical city with over a million people. Hispanic culture is common there, and the people are very socially active. It seems there is always a party going on. Quince años (15th birthday) celebrations are usually elegant parties and include dancing, eating and sometimes a serenade at the birthday girl’s window. Whenever there is not a party going on, it is common to go salsa dancing at nightclubs. Cruceños also enjoy having large barbecues out in the country, which last all day. I spent many weekends in the country relaxing along slow, shallow rivers, climbing sand dunes and horseback riding. Outside of the city, the native cultures are more visible. The area is home to many indigenous peoples including the Chiquitanos and Mojeños.

If I ever grew tired of the Santa Cruz region, there were many other places to explore. On the western side of the country are some of the tallest and coldest mountains on Earth, the Andes. The descendants of the Incas, the Aymara and Quechua peoples, live in this region, and many of them speak their native languages (rather than Spanish) and practice traditional religion. In the markets of

The salt flats of Uyuni, Potosí, are one of the world’s most unique landscapes with 10,000 square kilometers of salt surrounded by volcanic mountains.
La Paz, the largest Bolivian city in the Andes, one can buy figurines of the Pacha Mamá (Mother Nature) carved in clay or stone, animal symbols made of sugar, and llama fetuses for use in traditional rituals. There are many celebrations in honor of the Pacha Mamá, including the potato festival. Potatoes are a staple food for Bolivians in the high mountain regions, and the festival celebrates a successful harvest with singing, dancing and, of course, many foods made of potatoes.

Many holidays in Bolivia demonstrate a blending of cultures. For instance, Carnival, the biggest celebration in all of Bolivia, has Catholic origins, but it is interpreted differently in each region. Oruro is known for having the most elaborate Carnival costumes. Some people in Oruro spend all year making their Carnival masks. The masks represent El Tío, which literally means "the uncle" and represents the Devil figure common in native lore. Far away from Oruro, in some villages in the Bolivian Amazon, there are large celebrations for saint’s days. In San Antonio, the indigenous Tsimané people begin Saint Anthony’s Day by dousing each other in cold water and end it walking barefoot on hot coals!

Each region of Bolivia offers unique features. In southern Bolivia there are lush wine valleys. In Potosí colonial silver mines are still in operation. The historic capitol of Sucre is known for its excellent chocolate. In La Paz one can visit pre-Incan ruins, and in the Yungas, one can dance the saya, a dance form developed by African slaves.

As an anthropologist I spent several months living and working with the Tsimané people. Although the Tsimané have contact with the outside world, they still grow, gather or hunt most of their food, and they make most household items from plants or animals around them. Nothing in my previous travel experiences had prepared me for living with indigenous people in the jungle. I learned to bathe with piranhas, drink chicha (fermented yucca beverage), and fend off giant mosquitoes. I even tried my hand at spear fishing and learned to paddle a giant dugout canoe--although with far less skill than most 5-year-old Tsimané children.

I have traveled in many other countries since my Bolivian experience, but none has captured my heart like the warm people and unending adventure found in Bolivia. It is a country of tremendous diversity where the rules of the road are flexibility and a sense of humor. With a bus ticket and a little curiosity and open-mindedness, the possibilities are endless.

— Michelle Lieberman, associate editor.
Miklos sat across from the American exchange student at the dinner table.

“Anyu, she can’t even speak Hungarian,” Miklos told his mother.

“So, neither can you speak English,” she replied, stirring a pot of fruit soup. Miklos’ face fell into a scowl. Why did she have to remind him? He already knew he was failing English!

“You’re making gulyás and fruit soup?” Miklos pouted. Fruit soup was for company only. Ever since they’d picked this American up from the airport four hours ago, his parents had been treating her like royalty. He eyed the girl across the table. Csaba, his best friend, said that Americans were dumb. Well, this one sure didn’t look too smart!

Miklos sighed, loudly tapping his pencil on the open book in front of him. English One. He was 12 years old. He should be in English Three by now! She runs, he runs, you runs, he copied into his notebook. I drank ... drunk? ... drinked? Miklos slammed the textbook shut with a thud.

His mother fawned over the American all through dinner. His father rattled on in English. The flurry of words whizzed over Miklos’ head in a meaningless, tangled muddle.

“Apú,” Miklos interrupted, “Can you come to my water polo game tomorrow?” He tugged at his father’s sleeve. “Can you?” he insisted.

“Kuss!” Andras said fiercely. “No, I can’t go. We have to register your sister for school.”

Miklos was dumbfounded. His father never told him to shut up, and he never missed a water polo match. His mouth gaped wide. He let his spoon splatter into his gulyás, casting orange paprika broth droplets onto the girl. He stomped into his room without saying sorry.

Miklos could hear Anyu clearing the table. He waited for her to check up on him when the dishes stopped rattling, but she didn’t. Miklos hated to be ignored! He padded into the hall. The kitchen’s mahogany doors were shut tight, lights off. The lace-covered dining room table was neatly set for tomorrow’s breakfast. Everything was quiet.

The television’s glow lit up Miklos’ face as he tiptoed past the living room. He was hungry. Anyu hadn’t even left his plate out like she usually did when he didn’t eat. He slipped into the foyer and opened the pantry under the stairs. He knew better than to swipe a snack, but he pulled out a chocolate bar anyway...and froze. Suddenly, he felt like he was being watched.

He looked up the wooden steps. The American was there. She had seen! Should he pretend he hadn’t seen her? Would she tell?

“No is!” the American whispered. “Me too!”

Miklos was stunned. She spoke in Hungarian! He knew right then that she wouldn’t snitch on him. He pocketed another chocolate and crept up the stairs.

“Is no Hershey. Is good okay,” he whispered,
handing her the bar.

"Thanks," she said, tossing a weird neon ball in her hand as she walked into her room. The ball looked like a starburst of rubber bands, and it made a swishing sound as it hit her palm.

"What is?" Miklos asked.

"It's a Koosh ball," she said and tossed it to him.

"Kuss ball?" To Miklos, kuss meant shut up, and if he wasn't allowed to say that, neither could she! He tossed the ball back to her, covering his mouth. "You bad say!"

"What do you mean?" she cried.

Miklos didn't know how to explain, but he sure couldn't let her go around telling everyone she had a shut up ball. He pointed at the ball. "Bad hush," he tried again. By the look on her face, Miklos knew she thought he was goofy.

"I don't understand," she said.

He spotted her translation dictionary resting on the bed. That was it! He snatched the book and flipped through the pages...K...ku...kuss—"Here!" he said proudly, pointing to the word.

"Kuss," the girl read. "Oh no, not k-u-s-s. I meant k-o-o-s-h."

"No, is like same," Miklos replied, motioning her to read.

"Kuss. Shut up." She read and burst out laughing. "Koosh sounds like the Hungarian word kuss? Kuss, koosh—they're homonyms!" she grinned. "Shut up ball?"

"No say, is bad!" Miklos smiled. "De, is vicces, yes?"

"Vit-zesh?" she asked, lifting her eyebrows. Miklos looked through the dictionary again.

"Vicces, Fun-ny?" he explained.

The girl smiled, and her eyes twinkled.

Suddenly, Miklos didn't want her to go home anymore—not yet anyway. Maybe she could help him learn English! He pointed to himself. "Én vagyok Miklos."

"I'm Gail," she returned with a strong hand-
DEAR HANNA

"Stop! Listen to us! We are your eyes talking to you, Hanna.

"Do us a favor; close us for a moment and remember the potluck dinner last Friday night. All the grown-ups went to the wooden table in the den. Five kids and you stayed at the kitchen table. You acted like a clown who had buttons to push all over your face and arms. If someone pushed the pretend button on your nose, you leaned over and looked into their eyes with the saddest expression. If someone pushed the pretend button on your chin, you would stare into their faces giggling. Remember how blissfully happy you all were?

"All the eyes in the room were glistening with pure delight, changing each other's moods from shyness to exuberance, from tearfulness to hilarity. That's because eyes can see deeply into another person's inner-being.

"Now remember when you interviewed Grandpa with a tape recorder? He was over 90 years old. You asked about his growing up years in North Dakota. He told you about going from farm to farm with his father by horse and buggy doing construction work. Remember how Grandpa's eyes looked hazily into space. His descriptions were vivid and in such detail that we knew his eyes were seeing it all just as it was—the boards of wood, sawing, nailing, painting, eating at the farmer's table and moving on when the work was completed.

"So, do you see what a miracle eyes are? They can remember scenes from very long ago, and even more miraculously, they can look into another person's eyes with such strong feeling that the person may remember the feeling expressed in that look for the rest of their lives."

And now, dear readers and friends, remember the eyes carry the messages of the deepest feelings from one person to another. If your heart feels pity for the pain of another, if your heart rejoices with the success of another, if your love wants to encourage another in their moment of need, allow your heart to soak in the depth of your feeling and let your eyes carry your love and support.

Such instantaneous looks, born out of the depth of feeling and carried by your eyes to a friend, may well be remembered as the greatest gift of a lifetime.

In Peace,
The War: A Girl's Escape from Kosovo

Yugoslavia is divided into several regions. Slobodan Milosevic, who ruled the region of Serbia, also wanted to rule Kosovo, the region where my family lived. I was only seven when the war began. The Serbians were killing people and destroying houses. All the businesses were closed because of what was happening. My dad was a teacher, but the schools were closed.

One day we were sleeping when we heard a truck coming. There were some men hidden outside to protect us. If someone was coming to kill us, the men would wake everyone and start walking us away from our homes. My father was one of the men protecting us. He told my family to get out of the house. My mom called me, but I went back to sleep. People were checking to see if everyone was there. They were looking for me, but I was still in bed. Then my brother and sister found me in the room, sleeping. The truck turned out to just be our friend.

On another occasion, we heard a bombing, so we left again. We stopped in the woods where you could see our house. We saw houses burning, but they did not burn ours. They picked tall houses. They burned my friend's house.

One day my mom and brother thought the Serbians were all gone, so they went down to our house to bake bread. While Mom was baking, my brother was outside watching for Serbians. My brother told my mom to run because there were Serbians coming. My father did not let my mom wear pants, but she could not run in her skirt. She fell down and cut her hand on the fence. My brother was ahead of her up the hill. He came back and helped her. If my brother hadn't helped my mom, she would be dead, but because of him, she was safe. My two sisters, my father and I were up in the woods. We were crying because we thought my mom and brother were dead. Then they reached us, and we were all together.

We were playing outside one day, and a man said, "I know a way to get out of here. If you would like to get out of here, you have to get ready by tomorrow night." My family said yes because my mom and dad wanted a better place for us. So the next day, we started walking. It was snowing, and we had to walk for two days to get to the camp in Macedonia. Sometimes my parents carried my little sister because she was only four years old. Once I thought we were going to get killed because a baby was crying, and I thought the Serbians were going to hear her.

When we finally reached the camp we stayed in tents with two or three families. Everyone was friendly, and I had lots of fun. I had food and clothes. The camp directors brought us food to cook. We would walk around saying "peace." There was also a playground and sometimes concerts. It was fun, except for the war.

We were in the camp for a couple weeks. It was safer than our house in Kosovo. There was a poster that listed every family's last name. If you wanted to go to America, you would go to a certain place for information. If your father's name came up on the list, you could choose to go to America or stay. We were all so happy when my father's name was on the list. Soon, buses came and took us to the airplane. We flew to New York and then to New Hampshire to meet our sponsor, Cindy. None of us spoke any English. Cindy used a dictionary to talk with us. First she got us clothes, and then she took us to get an apartment.

My mom and dad both got jobs after a couple months. In September we started school. We were in an English as a Second Language program. My brother was 12. My older sister was 11. I was nine, and my little sister was four. It was hard at first, but the teacher played games with us to teach us English and a little math. When she talked, I picked up some words from her. She helped me write in English. After two years, I entered a regular fifth grade class. I was kind of lost in the beginning, but the kids and the teacher helped. It's not hard anymore.

My father and brother would like to go back to Kosovo, but everyone else wants to stay here. We're sad because my grandpa is dying, but my father's sister went back to visit him. There’s still a little fighting, but it's not as bad as it was. I'd like to go back to visit but not to stay.

—Sahadete Limani, 12, Manchester, NH.
Welcome to Sarajevo

As the bus entered the suburbs of Sarajevo, I felt my stomach flip-flop. It was getting dark, and the sky was filled with clouds. It was sprinkling a bit, and I could feel the cold through the thin glass windows of the bus. As far as the eye could see, on both sides of the road, were massive, uninspired cement apartment buildings. Many looked at least 30 or 40 stories high. Some buildings had huge chunks taken out of their sides or entire floors that looked burnt out and uninhabitable. Still, residents occupied the areas below, on top of, and to the sides of these destroyed areas. These crumbling gray buildings against the darkening sky looked anything but inviting. As if in support of this desolation, thick black wires cut through the blocks of apartments, guiding battered metal cable cars. Destruction, desolation and cold—as I looked out the window, these were the only three words the gloomy landscape inspired. My first thought was that I wanted to leave this uninviting place.

A few minutes later, the bus pulled into an equally gloomy, large cement bus station with about 20 cabs out front and a large group of cab drivers standing around waiting. My friend and I hopped off the bus into the cold. We had arranged to stay in the home of a former university professor. We were supposed to call her from the bus station when we arrived. However, our Bosnian phone card didn’t work in Sarajevo. Fortunately we had her address. Since we had no idea where we were or how far away she lived, and we didn’t speak Bosnian, we realized that our only option was to take a taxi. I told my friend, “You have to speak to the drivers since at least you know about 10 words of Bosnian compared to my zero.”

She groaned and said, “Okay.” We approached them and after a few minutes of arguing among themselves about where the address was, we climbed into one of the cabs. By this time, it was almost pitch black outside.

The driver took us up a steep hill and stopped in front of a house set back from the street. We paid the driver and got out. We were incredibly nervous. We didn’t know if we were still welcome, since it was late, or if this was even the right house. When we reached the glass front door, my friend said, “You have to knock, since I talked to the cab driver.”

Lacking a good counter-argument, I smiled weakly and said, “Okay.”

I knocked, but nobody came. I swallowed and knocked again—still nobody. Looking through the glass, I could see that the TV was on, so surely someone must be home. Maybe they just didn’t hear. I knocked again, and we waited...Suddenly, running full-force toward the door, in flowing purple robes, was a large woman, close to six feet tall, with curly, dark hair going in every direction. She was smiling and shouting gleefully and waving her arms like crazy. “I guess we’re welcome!” I said as I eyed the most expressive person I’d ever seen.

She opened the door, pulled us into the entry room and hugged us vigorously, talking enthusiastically all the while in Bosnian. She pointed for us to take off our shoes, as this was a Muslim household, and led us into her living room.

Every inch of the place was covered with carpets. Carpets hung on each wall, and several layers of carpets covered the floors, including a small, bright pink rabbit pelt that had been spread decorously across the single stair that divided the dining and living areas. As she motioned for us to sit down on the couch, I noted that even the couch was covered in a carpet. “Kava?!” (coffee) she shouted forcefully.

Not about to refuse this woman anything, we immediately nodded yes. She flew into the kitchen and rattled pots and pans. Then she returned bearing a pair of slippers for each of us to wear. Amazingly, we all happened to wear the
same shoe size. We slid into these wedge-heeled plastic shoes and admired the gold and sparkly straps that crossed the tops of our feet, feeling almost like royalty. The second time she came back from the kitchen, she carried a tray with Turkish-style coffee (much thicker than American coffee), milk, sugar cubes, and an unopened pack of cigarettes.

My friend and I served ourselves sugar cubes using the tiny spoon inside the dish. But, when we handed it to her, she just reached in and grabbed a cube. She dipped the cube into the coffee, removed it and then sucked the coffee out before stirring the cube into her coffee. I was completely stunned, as was my friend. For the past few months, I had been performing this very same ritual each time I was served a coffee. And each time, my friend had been making fun of me. What’s more is that I’d never seen anyone else do it. But there we were in this lady’s house in Sarajevo, and she practiced the very same habit! I wished desperately that we could tell her about it, but I knew gestures and expressions were insufficient for explaining this coincidence.

Nevertheless, we talked with her for quite a while, her in Bosnian, us in English and French, with lots of miming. She told us her son and husband had been killed in the war. The TV had been on since our arrival, so we even talked a bit about current events. Finally we had to go out to find some dinner. To show us where to go, she drew a map, complete with stick figures, one with wavy hair (me), one with straight hair (my friend).

We were very sorry to go when our last hours in Sarajevo came. The lady we stayed with seemed sad to see us go as well. She hugged us again and even began to cry as we went out the door. We kept turning back and waving to her again and again until she was out of sight.

As the bus pulled out of the city, I realized how quickly a single person could change my view of an entire place. When I arrived, all I could think about was leaving this dark, gloomy city, but in leaving, all I could do was wish that I were staying in this warm, welcoming place a little longer.

—Nicole Degli Espositi, Eugene, Oregon.

On My Way to Nowhere

I come upon a riverbed dried by the summer’s heat.
Rocks jutting from the ground make me a path to nowhere.

And I follow eagerly only to find my rocks, not rocks at all, rather toads; heads dug into the mud bathing their sultry skin in the heat.

And I walk nonetheless, feet bare and mind intent.
The feel of their skin echoes in my mind.

They turn their heads to gaze at me.
Pulled in, farther and farther into the deepness of those dark spheres.

I see a girl, cradled by the moonlight sleeping on a star.
Slipping through translucent bonds I enter her dream world.

She watches from a tree a man in a riverbed dancing on the backs of toads lost in a trance, leading him everywhere and yet nowhere.

—Gabe Roth, 15, Fayetteville, NY.

The Moon

It’s all knowing, all commanding.
Some worship it; some fear it.

It holds the power to turn water into glass, Black castle walls into silver knights.

It is as mysterious as an owl, one of its followers, Yet still as revealing as its brother, the sun.

Be careful, for it may cast its binding spell, And pull you into an eternal trance.

It can transform and affect you, For it is the moon.

—Elizabeth Kapp, 12, Gibsonia, Penn.
Hand in Hand

I have lived in Austria as a missionary kid for nine and a half years. I am not as comfortable in the United States as I am here. It took me two years to realize this, but I see now that there is no other way I would want to grow up. One advantage to being a missionary is that I have a different perspective on the world than most people. Europeans have an interesting view of Americans. Often we are seen as fat people with no care for anyone but ourselves. I have also met a few Americans who think that Europe is a destroyed continent after World War II. Both of these are opinions that I don’t agree with. I have seen both sides of the story. Europe is beautiful and has things that America could never offer, often because of its age. America has charms of its own. It has warm, open people who like to get to know you personally.

I am a Christian. God changed my life through a little girl while I was on a mission trip to Romania. Maybe God can affect a life by having someone read about it.

The child reached her hand out to me. I looked into her eyes and saw something that mystified me. In those beautiful, clear, dark eyes, I saw a look of complete trust—in me. So I put on my brightest smile and took her small hand in mine. Together we talked of things with childlike simplicity as I tried to figure out how I was worthy of such simple trust.

One look into the eyes of the girls at the Valenii de Munte State Orphanage was all it took to break my heart. Though many of them have been through unbelievable trials, they still retain a look of sweet innocence. Others look much older than they should. God tells us that we shouldn’t be afraid because we are young. If I didn’t believe this before I believe it now with my whole heart. Several little girls at an orphanage in the middle of nowhere taught me a valuable lesson, and it all started with the one girl who wanted to hold my hand.

I am not a very trusting person. It takes me a while to trust someone. I will not give them my heart until I am certain that they won’t break it. The problem with that is that sooner or later everyone is going to let me down. Every person will pull a piece off, whether they mean to or not. I’ve come to expect hurt. It’s hard to enjoy pleasure when I think that it will end in hurt. It’s like being in a relationship where you are always worried that it’s going to end.

God didn’t mean for it to be this way. He tells us not to worry about tomorrow. Take each day as it comes, step by step. Worry is wasted energy. Trust in God is the only way that we can make it through our day.

Just as this little girl held her hand out to me, God is holding his out to us all. He wants us to put our hands, our worries, out troubles, our relationships and everything else that we hold dear into his ever-loving hands.

—Kali Klingsmith, 15, Vienna, Austria.

What are some of the positive or negative effects of introducing a new religion to people? How do you share your experiences with God with others? Is there a difference between religion and spirituality?
All Wrapped Up

Neenah kneels and prays toward the dawn’s early light as it peeps over the horizon. In observance of Ramadan, she skips eating her favorite cereal and, instead, stretches and exercises.

As she packs her denim duffel bag for school, she sees her friend Bell bouncing up the steps. Neenah swings the door open while tightening the knot on her black hijab. “As-Salaam Alaikum,” she says.

“Alaikum As-Salaam. You could have told me,” a hyper Bell says, circling her best friend.

“And be front-page news again, Miss Journalist?”

“At least they can’t call the hijab a potential gang marker.”

“Yeah, can you believe they let us sell bandannas as a fund raiser, but we can’t wear them to school?” Neenah says heading out the door.

Neenah and Bell arrive at school and scurry into their classroom. The chattering students’ sudden quietness alarms Ms. Gibbs. Looking over her gold-rimmed glasses, she says, “Neenah, I will have to ask you to remove the scarf.”

“It’s a hijab, and I’m wearing it in observance of Ramadan,” Neenah replies.

“You were warned last week. Gather your belongings and report to the principal’s office,” Ms. Gibbs says reaching for the intercom button.

“Stay strong,” Bell whispers.

Neenah’s fast stride slows to a stroll as she enters the administrative office. Mr. Petersen, waving her in says, “Have a seat, Miss Hakeem.” Neenah flops into the hard leather chair. He continues, “Although you’re a model student athlete, I can’t give you special privileges.”

“Mr. Petersen, I wear the hijab to the mosque,” Neenah says fidgeting.

“According to the school’s dress policy, your scarf is inappropriate,” Mr. Petersen states, flipping through a book. He points to pictures of Muslim women from Pakistan and Russia wearing hijabs that cover the forehead, shoulders and chest. Neenah’s hijab covers only her hair.

“If you don’t remove the scarf you will be suspended and will not be able to run in the track meet.”

“No, I won’t take it off,” Neenah says pulling on the hijab.

“Then I expect a parent conference when you return to school on Monday.”

Neenah storms out of the office and bumps into Bell snooping around.

“What did he say?” Bell calmly asks.

“That I’m suspended until Monday.”

“And miss the track meet! On what grounds?”

“Because I don’t wear the hijab according to some book,” Neenah says walking out the door.

The principal’s office notified Neenah’s parents of her suspension. “Welcome to the real world,” her dad says, sliding her mail across the table.

Neenah rips open the envelope from Tennessee State University’s track program. Speed-reading the letter twice, a confused Neenah yells, “They’ll be at the meet on Saturday and want to offer me a full scholarship!” Stuffing the letter into her mother’s hands, she asks, “What am I going to do?”
Her mother, scanning the letter replies, “You’re stuck between a rock and a hard place.”

Later that evening, Bell races up the stairs to Neenah’s room. “What took you so long?” asks Neenah.

“Before I forget,” Bell says catching her breath and handing Neenah a business card, “Here’s the lawyer’s number my mom sent, and I wrote about your suspension in the e-news letter.”

“Bell, no marches or sit-ins, promise me.”

“Neenah, you’re all wrapped up. Not too many people would miss the opportunity to run for the same school where Wilma Rudolph broke records. Sleep tight,” Bell says, bolting for the stairs.

The phone’s loud ring snaps Neenah out of daydreaming the next day. “Quick, turn to channel five,” Bell screams into her ear. Neenah hits the remote control and sees hundreds of students wearing purple and white bandannas chanting, “Celebrate diversity!”

A reporter interviews Abdul Muhammad, a lawyer from the Council on American-Islamic Relations. “I represent the Hakeem family,” he states, glaring into the camera. “Neenah’s hijab style wouldn’t be out of place at any mosque that serves a primarily African American congregation. There are differences of opinion in all faiths.”

“It would take Bell to help unwrap me,” a teary-eyed Neenah mumbles. The phone rings, and Neenah, snatching the receiver up before the second ring yells, “Bell!”

“Neenah Hakeem, this is Mrs. Woo from the administrative office. Mr. Petersen has lifted your suspension.”


The next day Mr. Peterson, apologizing to Neenah and her parents says, “I hope this doesn’t distract you from your studies or from running your best on Saturday.”

“No, Mr. Petersen, it won’t because I have faith,” Neenah, smiling, says confidently.

—Stefanie Royal, Los Angeles, Calif.

Confusion

I think perhaps I should prefer
Deep sorrow to not knowing.
I think perhaps I should prefer
To weep than scratch my head.

I know when I don’t understand
My mind whirls like a torrent.
I know when I don’t understand
I stare off, blank and dazed.

I feel that when deep sorrow comes
At least then I can meet it.
I feel that when deep sorrow comes
I’m glad to know my foe.

But when confusion comes to me
And my mind is all a blur
It’s then that I am scared and small
And wondering where to turn.

When I know not the desires
Of my very heart and soul
And know not my opinion
Then I cannot set a goal.

And with nothing to aspire to
One flounders in the dark.
And when one can’t say their wants and needs
Then life is bleak and stark.

A philosopher said, “Know thyself”
Now heed his words with care
For while you know just what you want
Your sorrows will be rare.

For when conflict lies outside yourself
Your soul is safe inside.
But when your soul should clash within itself
There’s nowhere you can hide.

—Hailey Heinz, 14, Eagle River, Alaska.

Chasing the Wind

Letting everything out
Hooves pound against the warm ground
With speed chasing the wind.

—Melanie Lippert, 13, Gibsonia, Penn.
Students in Iraq (up to high school age) are looking for pen pals. Send letters or requests for more information to Leah Wells, education@napf.org.

The Hope Club of international friendship is looking for pen pals ages 11 to 17. Write in English or German. Letters, drawings, paintings, photos, books and postcards. Send to: Larissa Platonova
M-D Molodyozhny 49A / 43
247400 Svetlogorisk
The Gomel Region, BELARUS

Emma Eubjarde, girl, 17
Lillgatan 5
333-30 Smålandstener, SWEDEN
sirscoop@lycos.com
Int: basketball, badminton, kubb, music, drawing, writing and daydreaming

Elizabeth Moore, girl, 13
30 Hillside Ave.
San Rafael, CA. 94901, USA
ed.moore@sbcglobal.net
Int: tennis, web design, community service

Lynia Kwaramba, girl, 17
52 Bise Crescent
Zengeza 1
Chitungwiza, ZIMBABWE
Int: movies, comedies, music, novels

Lebuhang Farera, boy, 16
118 Mukonde St.
PO Mukakose
Harare, ZIMBABWE

Farai Pedzisayi, boy 15
18 Mufenje Road
Harar, ZIMBABWE
Int: reading, poems and art

Clifford Tapsumanei Manyenga, boy
Rem 162
Masotsna Ndlovu Prospect Waterfalls
Harare, ZIMBABWE

“In Zimbabwe, half of the new generation is affected by the HIV virus, and that will cause our country not to develop in the next 15 years. Most of the people are dying, and most of them are youth—our country's future.”

Quallacot
A game by kids for kids
(and adults, too!)

This game was invented and played by me and all of my friends.

For this game you’ll need:
• a hallway, an alley, or any narrow space
• a hackey-sack or any small, soft ball.
• two players

Directions:
Player one sits on one end of the narrow space, and player two sits on the other. You must hit the ball behind the other player without throwing the ball (you use your hands to hit the ball.)

If you get the ball behind your opponent, you get one point. You must not get too close to your opponent or touch them, or they will get a foul shot. A foul shot is worth three points.

The main idea of this game is to have fun with your siblings, friends, relatives or parents.

—Melissa Irek and friends, 10, Vista, California.
Best Friends Forever?

Adriana Torres Guzmán, 13, and María Eugenia Muero, 12, are best friends in Puerto Rico. They wrote these letters to work through their separation.

I am best friends with a girl I met at school in the fifth grade named Maria. We’ve gone through rough and good times, and still we survived together. But this year something terrible happened; we were broken into two different schools. Now she lives in Ponce, which is far, far away from Villalba, where I live.

We used to always be together. I even spent weeks staying at her house. Now we’re moving on to the eighth grade, and we both feel very scared and not ready. I guess we will have to wait and see what happens. We’ve been crying since the day we were told that Maria was moving. I hope that she doesn’t find another best friend because I know that I wouldn’t do that to her and make her suffer more than she already has.

I’m afraid of my future. I’m afraid of change. I feel like an outsider here trying to enter years of friendship. I don’t know what to say or do. In my old school, I knew everybody since second grade. I always knew what to say in a conversation and what to do in sticky situations.

I know change happens, but I didn’t want it to come this soon. My attitude is changing, and I can’t seem to control it. When I look around I feel uncomfortable, an outsider. I hope that one day things will change and be like old times with friends. I used to know what I wanted to be when I grow up; now I’m not so sure. I don’t feel like part of this school. My old school lies within me, but it’s slowly disappearing. All those fun times are just memories. My friends’ faces are also disappearing from my mind. I don’t want them to.

Here things are new, different and weird to me. I can’t see myself having a good time in this unfamiliar place. There are new faces all around, and it’s hard to start over again. But when I think of the good times I suddenly feel stronger and get the courage I need to move on. I try to feel happy and positive, and keep a smile on my face.

School started, and we are doing just fine. This has only been possible because we call each other very often. Even though we still miss each other very much, we know that it is for our own good. The schools are totally different from what we expected. It is still hard to be alone, especially since we will graduate this year. It is going to be very hard to look around and not see my partner, my friend and the person I count on.

I often wonder what’s going to become of me. I wonder what it would be like in somebody else’s shoes. Are others’ lives easier, the same or harder than mine? Then again, only God knows that, and I should be happy, for he created me. I hope that all people are happy inside and out.

I don’t want to live a lie. I want to see deep inside myself. I want somebody to understand how I feel and to tell me it’s okay to cry. I want to cry, but I’m afraid I’ll be embarrassed. I want to tell someone how I feel. Someday I’ll learn how to express myself. Until then, I’ll have to wait.

—Adriana

—Maria
Rage is Not a 1-Day Thing!

Researcher, playwright and performer Awele Makeba’s play, “Rage is Not a 1-Day Thing!” examines the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-56. It features 15-year-old Claudette Colvin and 18-year old Mary Louise Smith, along with Rosa Parks and Joanne Robinson. Both teenagers refused to give up their bus seats and were arrested. And, they did it months before Parks. The portrayal of Parks also reshapes and corrects history. Parks had for years been an activist. She was not merely “tired,” but rather, poised and prepared to challenge the unfair system that daily degraded and humiliated African American citizens.

The performance is appropriate for middle school through adult audiences.

For more information see www.Awele.com

—Ruth Koenig, Eugene, Oregon.

Frogs in Trouble

Amphibian populations around the world have been declining for decades, and no one knows exactly why. American scientists have been studying the effect of Atrazine, the most common herbicide in the U.S., on frogs for almost 30 years. A number of studies have found negative effects of Atrazine on frog populations, including changes in sex ratio, increased rates of hermaphroditism, and increased mortality. A recent study in the journal Nature suggests that Atrazine may have similar effects on all amphibians. Atrazine is found in most water sources in the U.S., including rainwater.

Source: Wildlimes Report
(Trevor@serconline.org)

Students Get a Voice

Secondary school students in Vancouver, Canada, will now have a guaranteed voice in school affairs for the first time. Education Minister Christy Clark decided to give students a spot on each school’s planning council. Each council, which now consists of a school principal, one teacher elected by peers and three parents from the school’s parent advisory council, will now also include one student.

Source: School Leaders Digest
(jclark@connaughted.com)

No to GMOs

The Environmental Protection Agency of Ethiopia reported that the country is producing a surplus of food for the seventh year in a row—thanks to small farmers using traditional practices, few chemical fertilizers and no genetic engineering.

At the same time, Zambian president Levy Mwanawasa said his government would not reconsider its decision to reject genetically engineered food as aid to avert a hunger crisis. He said, “We have rejected GM food. It is not a slight on donors. There is no conclusive evidence that it is safe. We wish not to use our people as guinea pigs in this experiment.”

Sources: Sierra (Nov./Dec. 2002) and The Runoff (Winter 2002)

Mayan Judicial System

In Guatemala local judges are abandoning the Spanish-style justice system that was imposed on the native people 500 years ago. Instead they are returning to Mayan traditions that favor mediation, reconciliation and personal contact between the victim and the transgressor. In the Mayan system, offenders are often sent to work for the victim instead of to jail. A council of elders is consulted, and judges visit the homes where the dispute is taking place and encourage face-to-face discussions between the parties.

Source: Yes! (Winter 2003)

Generation Fix: Young Ideas for a Better World by Elizabeth Rusch (Beyond Words). This book compiles stories of ordinary kids who put their ideas into action to help others. It deals with issues such as hunger, the environment, discrimination and homelessness. Includes a chapter on how to start volunteering and organizations to contact. Ages 10 and up. ISBN: 1-58270-067-2.

Raising Yoder’s Barn by Jane Yolen, paintings by Bernie Fuchs (Little, Brown). What happens when a fire destroys the barn of eight-year-old Matthew Yoder’s family? This story shows the strength and loyalty of an Amish community. Ages 6–9. ISBN: 0-316-07593-0.


Origami from Around the World by Vicente Palacios (Dover). This instruction book for advanced origami makers includes how to make a suit of armor, bird in a boat, Buddha, and a little dog. Ages 10 and up. ISBN: 0-486-42222-4.

Can You Guess My Name? Traditional Tales Around the World retold by Judy Sierra, Illust. Stefano Vitale (Clarion). Sierra gathers classic fairy tales like “The Three Little Pigs” and “Hansel and Gretel” and compares them with versions on similar themes from around the world. Ages 7 and up. ISBN: 0-618-13328-3.

Pájaro Verde / The Green Bird as told by Joe Hayes, Illust. Antonio Castro L. (Cinco Puntos). This classic tale from New Mexico’s magical folklore is enriched with vivid and dreamlike illustrations. It is the story of a girl who marries an enchanted prince, and how she overcomes her family’s envy and restores her husband’s kingdom. Ages 8–10. ISBN: 0-938317-65-2.


Journal to the Soul for Teenagers by Rose Offner (Celestial Arts). This journal is filled with ways for teens to write about the many issues that they may be facing, such as rebellion, finding ones true self, love, sexuality, forgiveness and family life. Ages 12–17. ISBN: 0-89087-899-4.

Jakes and Dustin Take Off by Tilke Elkins (Woodley & Watts). Join the Soul Transporters as they cruise the planet in their flying house. They learn neat things along the way, like how to build tree houses, which creatures glow in the dark, and why vegetables aren’t blue. Kickoff book for All Round magazine. All ages. ISBN: 0-9688648-0-5.
Intergenerational is one of my favorite words. It refers to the bringing together of people from different generations. Intergenerational programs are usually those that include children and older adults, like grandparents and great-grandparents. Often the childrens' parents, teachers, and group leaders are involved as well.

Many children today do not have the opportunity to interact with older adults. Generations often live separately whereas in the past, and still in many countries, the extended family is all under one roof. Through intergenerational activities, we can create opportunities for interaction between these two groups that both have so much to give.

By interacting with elders, students can gain positive role models and develop a perspective about aging. Elders can share their life experiences. Both generations have a chance to express themselves and to feel like a part of the community.

“Children ought to know what went into their making, to know that life is a braided cord of humanity stretching up from a long time ago.” (Russell Baker)

Events can be hosted at schools, senior centers or residential elder facilities, depending on the mobility of the participants. Seniors can be invited to volunteer in the classroom or attend a special event at school, or the class can take a planned program to the seniors. An ongoing series of interactions creates a richer experience, and gives new friends more time to learn about each other. Interactions can be direct or indirect. Students can make and send greeting cards or have their art displayed in an elder facility, but a hand-delivered Valentine can’t be beat!

**Activity Ideas**

- Pick flowers and give bouquets to elders.
- Play balloon volleyball.
- Take a box of props and create improvisational drama or play charades.
- Have students and elders think of rhyming words and make a poem.
- Have a talent show.
- Interview people about where they have traveled.
- Talk about the old days.
- Tape record your interviews.
- Make a collage or bulletin board of family photos.
- Take pictures.
- Ask an elder about their first love.
- Make artwork reflective of world cultures.
- Talk about family customs and cultural heritage.
- Listen to music from other lands.
- Dance.

**Keys to Success**

Make sure both children and elders have a chance to participate.

Use many colorful visuals that are easy to see.

Pair elders and youngers one-to-one, or match groups of participants to encourage interaction. Sometimes children are more comfortable in groups, so they can be with their peers.

Keep it structured and simple.

Adults should be handy to supervise and make sure the safety rules of the facility are followed.

All adults involved (parents, teachers, staff, activities director) should discuss the goals and objectives of the visit beforehand.

Help prepare students by suggesting conversation starters and describing the facility they will be visiting.

Once you have an activity in mind, the first step is to contact the activities coordinator of the facility you wish to visit. This will be the main contact person you will work with. It’s a good idea to ask them which activities have been done in the past. Also, you may want to invite local media to attend your event.

After the activity, have students reflect on their experiences through discussion and journaling. Ask them for suggestions for further activities.

The programs should be fun. Experiment to see which activities seem appropriate for your groups. Perhaps you can set up an ongoing program and encourage others in your community to do the same.

—Laura Numsen, Eugene, Oregon.

*Over the past 15 years, Laura has worked as a teacher, activities director and intergenerational programs coordinator.*

*For more ideas and information, e-mail: skygroove@yahoo.com*
Finding Patience

Mulla Nasruddin was a Sufi teacher and saint believed to have born in 1208 in Turkey. Mulla did not advise his followers. He realized that his teaching would reach more people if he gave it away with jokes, fun and wit. Anecdotes with Mulla touch many topics like common sense, thrift and courage. He also spread his religious teachings and ridiculed the government through his funny stories. Here is a thought-provoking and funny story from Mulla.

A young man came to Mulla Nasruddin for advice. “I am going to work for the king. I want to know how to do my job well,” said the young man.

“You need only one thing to work for the royals,” said Mulla.

“And what is that?” asked the young man.

Mulla got up from his chair and said, “Patience.”

The young man nodded and waited for Mulla to continue.

“You need patience,” said Mulla.

“Yes, sir. I will be patient,” said the young man with a smile.

“You need to be patient,” said Mulla again pacing the room.

“Of course, great man. I will develop patience,” said the young man. He frowned and looked at Mulla.

“And you definitely need patience,” said Mulla as he sat down again.

“You have told me that a thousand times. What else?” asked the young man shouting at Mulla.

“You have not even joined the palace. You have lost your patience already,” said Mulla smiling.

The young man understood the purpose of the little experiment and the advice from Mulla. Mulla Nasruddin knew that the young man would never forget the importance of being patient.

—Chitra Soundar, West Midlands, United Kingdom.

Dancing Dogs: A Cuban Folk-tail

Long ago, dogs used to enjoy dancing. Dogs came from all over the world to dance at an annual dog fiesta. All different kinds of dogs were welcome at these festivals, but before stepping onto the dance floor, each dog had to remove its tail and hang it on a branch of a tree near the entrance.

“This way we won’t whip each other with our tails, and no one will get hurt,” the dogs always reminded each other as they were taking off their tails.

One year, a fight broke out at the dog dance. There was a great deal of snarling, howling, barking and clawing. All the dogs were scared. They ran away in such a big hurry that each one grabbed the first tail it spotted as it raced past the tree.

That is why, to this day, every time two dogs meet each other, each dog sniffs the other’s tail, hoping to find the one left behind during the big fight at the last of the famous dancing-dog festivals.

—Margarita Engle, Cuban American, Clovis, Calif.

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From "Kaleidoscope" by Greg Acuna. an Earthling residing in Goa, India. See www.peacelings.net.

Are we INDEPENDENT beings?
We need air to breathe,
Food, sleep,
Light for seeing.
The Earth below supports us well—
In too many ways to tell.
We share the dark, and the light,
Earth, Air, Water, Fire.
Signs, signs, we're intertwined,
What's mine is yours,
And yours is mine.

So say, "I'm an Earthling."
And take care of the place,
Remember it's home
To the whole human race.

And be kind to our friends
All the animals and plants.
From the biggest of whales,
To the smallest of ants.