Skipping Stones
A Multicultural Magazine
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Korea
Youth Honor Awards
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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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From the Editor

Why is it that just when we get comfortable where we are, things change again? This was the question I asked myself as I drove more than halfway across the country, from Oregon to Indiana for school, leaving behind *Skipping Stones*, my hometown, and the Korean students I tutored for so long. I looked to the scenery out the window for an answer, but the land only seemed to echo thoughts. As fir trees changed to desert and desert to grassy plains, it seemed to whisper, “Change! Change!”

I was unable to take my eyes off of the landscape whizzing by. The immense beauty and diversity of the country of my birth was striking: the barren desert of Eastern Oregon; the brilliant red rocks of Utah; the green corn fields of Nebraska. Refreshed by each new sight, I began to realize how much I needed the renewal of a change of scene; it wakened my senses as I drove hour after hour, sometimes for as long as 12 hours a day.

So, perhaps the land was hiding an answer to my question after all—we can get too comfortable staying where we are, so comfortable we can fall asleep at the wheel, so to speak. Changing our environment lets us have a change of heart, to see with new eyes and hear with open ears. How much the world longs for us to change and grow as global citizens! As St. Catherine of Siena said, “When we are who we’re meant to be, we’ll set the world ablaze.”

I suddenly realized the deepest reason why I was going off to school in Indiana: To become who I am meant to be, to develop my gifts so that they can ignite change. The truth is, if I don’t, who will? None of us is replaceable. Readers, your talents are unique and your roles, irreplaceable!

Lucius Seneca, a writer and philosopher, wrote, “Look up at the stars lighting up the sky: Not one of them stays in the same place.”

Dear readers, we are the stars, and by changing and growing, we light up the world. As you encounter changes this season, and wonder if you ought to turn back, I challenge you to take a quick look at your worst fears, and then just grab them and tickle them! Why not? We don’t have a moment to lose. We have important work to do—lighting up the world with our gifts.

For me, this school year may not always be comfortable, but it will be a time of great change, growth and discovery. I’m sure it will be for you, too.

Onward and upward!

—Nicole Degli Esposti. Nicole hopes to continue contributing her ideas and experiences when she can.

• Dear Readers: What are your gifts? How did you find them? How do you use them to help others? Write us!

A Day of Dialogue for Intercultural, Interfaith and International Understanding

Did you notice that often, lack of communication or misunderstanding is the cause of problems that arise between friends, family or community members? We develop fear and mistrust, or treat each other like strangers when there is no communication. Learning to really listen to each other helps! We suggest September 11 be observed as a Day of Dialogue to open lines of communication in your immediate world—at home, school or neighborhood. Organize an event, small or large, to help promote an understanding between various segments of your community.
Could It Be Reused?
There is no doubt that we all use and need paper. In fact, people use billions of pieces of paper in just one day. In spite of all this, does anyone really care where this paper comes from? All the paper we use results in the death of millions of trees. These trees are actually needed very much for something else: supplying oxygen. Since we need paper and we need trees, why waste either? The solution is recycling because it allows us to reuse paper, saving our trees. One person could contribute so much by recycling. Next time, ask yourself, "Should I get rid of it, or could it be reused."

—Connor Almon, Grade 6, New York.

Dear Skipping Stones:
In appreciation of your organization, we, the Sheldon High School Multicultural Club, would like to present you with $500 towards your book donation program. We hope it will help you further your quest to expand multicultural education.

As a club, we participate in community events and multicultural awareness issues. We admire your organization for its devotion to these ideals. Thanks for doing a great job!

The Sheldon Multicultural Club, Eugene, Oregon.

On September 11th, I watched the smoke pour out of where the World Trade Center once was. The two fire departments near me both lost two-thirds of their men. It was a very disturbing period for me, as it was for many. When the anniversary came around, the memories flooded back to me. So, I wrote this poem to express how I felt.

Soul of the Smoke
Last night I saw it,
It kept me awake
The essence of towers,
The soul of the smoke I saw
On that dreaded day.

It spread over Brooklyn,
Right up to space
The memories that flooded
Tears on my face.

And now the flag is ripped
That soul is finally released
I saw it like I did that day,
Soul of the smoke.

—Isabelle Coler, 13, New York.

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The Sheldon Multicultural Club, Eugene, Oregon.

We are an afterschool program, for ages 9–12 in Minnesota, USA. We wish to form an E-mail Club with international classroom-to-classroom connections. If you’re interested, please write or e-mail us at: stacey.dahlstrom@isd623.org Attn: Sushi Sharma Parkview Center School Friendship Connection Program 701 West County Road B Roseville, MN 55113 USA

Dear Skipping Stones:
On behalf of the teaching staff and all the students of our school, I’d like to thank you for all your efforts in helping our school to get English books and magazines. They are a real treasure for us! We have already started to use them in English classes and the students love them! Thank you so much for your help and support.

—Nadiya Senchuk, Vyzhnytsia, Ukraine.
Suppose He’s an Angel

You don’t know his name; you don’t know his situation. He isn’t good looking at all. The big glasses he wears cover his weak eyes. His clothes are always dirty along with his fingernails.

He walks into the restaurant every day around the same time. It’s nine o’clock now. The door opens and you look to your left. The same beat-up, dirty jeans walk in along with the same dirty, red baseball cap.

His eyes never leave your face, and a feeling of fear rushes through your entire body. Why does he always stare at you? You quickly sit him at his favorite table. Suppose he’s an angel! What if he is here to watch over you?

Nine-thirty now. He starts to get up. You quickly walk over to the cash register. He reaches in his pocket and pulls out a couple of crumpled bills and small change. His filthy fingers frantically dig through his pockets to find a dollar.

He looks up to meet his eyes with yours and his dark yellow teeth form a smile. “Any chance you could let an old man go a dollar short?” he says.

The strong smell of coffee on his breath makes your stomach turn. You quickly stop staring at his teeth, wondering if he saw.

“Sure,” you tell him.

“Thanks,” he says, “You’re an angel.”

He winks at you, and walks out.

—Hilary Rosen, grade 11, New York.

This Bitter World

No one wants to be unwanted
Only liked
Through the times of wind and shadows
To see only light
But we fool ourselves, dear friends
We take our lives for granted
We see the world a morbid cloud
But never guess how others suffer more
We gather all of our might
To look and judge
But little do we know
The harm it does
Life is harsh, I can say that
Like a thorn grown on a vine
Not everyone gets what they want
But why judge?
We are all the same,
Living in this cold and bitter world.

—Yelena Levina, 14, New York.

“I’ve spent 13 years living in Brooklyn, New York. But, like many Americans, I was not born here. I was born on a cool May day in the year 1989, in Minsk, Belarus. Due to hard times in Belarus and the horrible event of Chernobyl, my family moved to America hoping to find a better life. Even though there was struggle in the beginning, I have learned much from America. In writing the poem, I wanted to express my feelings about bigotry and prejudice. Although this poem seems a bit off scale with what happens in real life, I hope to get these feelings across.”

Nobody Said Life Would Be Easy

I believe the teens of today have it harder than the teens of the past. Parents want everything for their children. They want us to do well in school, sports, learn an instrument, have lots of friends and basically, do and excel in everything! In return, we try to please our parents by doing and excelling in everything. Sometimes, though, it gets extremely difficult for us to juggle everything at once. But you see, we don’t quit anything because it would let our parents down, and not live up to their expectations. That tears us up—it’s an extremely hard issue teenagers have to face.

Yes, things for teens have changed, and they will continue to change for centuries to come. Hey, in a few decades, our children and grandchildren will probably say we had it easy compared to their lives. By the way things are going, maybe they’ll be right!

—Sarah Ritchey, 14, Pennsylvania.
Ancient Saguaro

If a Saguaro could talk, what would it say?
That pioneers on horses passed this way?

If a Saguaro could smell, what would it sniff?
Would it smell the wild blossoms on its arms so stiff?

If a Saguaro could hear, what would it listen to?
Would it listen closely and hear Indian spirits coo?

If a Saguaro could see, what would it look at?
Would it have looked on a mountain and seen a wild cat?

If a Saguaro could think, what would be on its mind?
Would it be thinking, what happened to time?

—Stephanie Fox-Dixon, age 13, Iowa. “I wrote this after a vacation to Arizona.”

Beautiful Crimea

I live in Crimea, a part of Ukraine. The Crimean peninsula juts far out into the Black Sea; it is shaped like a flat fish.

If you like the sea and mountains, or if you love the sun and fresh, salubrious air, come to the Crimea. You will even find waterfalls, ruins of ancient Rome and Byzantine and Genoese fortresses.

On each side of the Crimea, nearly four hundred miles apart, two enormous river systems descend across the steppes. Mountains stretch in a curved arc from the town of Sevastopol in the south-west to the town of Feodosia, in the east—about 120 miles long.

—Adelina Galyautolinova, 16, Sevastopol, Ukraine.

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Summertime in Taiwan

The Taiwanese dialect floats through the air-conditioned bus
Like a white down feather.

Palm trees dot the borders of winding roads, competing with the scattered billboards for a piece of the dusty ground.

I study signs, pick out simple characters I recognize, occasionally enticed by the phrase For beef noodle soup outlined in bright pink.

A small house:
The roof is of rusting scrap metal.
Mopeds line the front, parked in conflicting directions.

There is a little girl in pigtail braids
Squatting over a neon green plastic wash-basin.
Her younger brother runs around her, trying to catch a splash of cool water under his sandals.

He scrambles to his father,
Who lounges on a stool
Propped up against the plaster wall,
Who picks him up by those gangly browned arms. He receives a smile of crooked teeth and tobacco stains.

I turn away when it becomes too difficult to strain my neck, and let the view be overtaken by a sloping hill.

Beyond the rice paddy fields:
Gray smog encircles the tops of towering skyscrapers Illuminated by flashing lights, car honks, and the upbeat rhythm of karaoke.

—Ida Shiang, 17, Chinese American, New York.
Tena, Ecuador: My Journal

Here are some journal entries from when I went on a mission trip to Tena, Ecuador. I’m sharing what I wrote in my journal because I want people to know how good it feels to help—and how sometimes it hurts, too.

June 22, 2003

Yesterday, all these little kids kept coming up to my Dad and shaking his hand. It was really cute. I really wish I could speak more Spanish.

*** on the bus ***

The hills are huge and beautiful! I still can’t get over it...I’m in Ecuador! I love it; it is so friendly and gorgeous! Even though there’s poverty, people are so nice. That’s the difference between the U.S. and here. We have money and are not grateful; here, people have very little and are very grateful.

I felt so bad when I gave a little boy 25 cents yesterday. His hands were so worn down and dirty from all those shoes he polished. His eyes were dark brown and so full of faith and hope.

*** 5 p.m. ***

There was a landslide and we couldn’t get through because of the mud. And you know what? I’m really happy. At first, I got off the bus and was like, “OK, we’ll be stuck here for half an hour.”

But, my friend, Becca, said, “Hey, want to play cards until we get back on the road again?”

I agreed to, and while I waited for her to get the cards, I introduced myself to a few little girls in the village near the road. There were four of them. One of the girls’ names was Natalie. She had a blue dress on. The dress had a rip in it and it looked like it used to be a school uniform. When Becca came back with the cards, the little girls watched attentively; they probably had not seen cards before. Later, we colored; I gave one of the girls a drawing I did of a gato.

After that, I found my Dad playing fútbol with some of the boys from the small village. I’m so happy we got stuck in traffic! In the U.S., we would have been in our cars and angry. Here, we got out of cars and buses and met people. The next time I get stuck in a traffic jam, I’m going to get out of my car and play soccer!

June 25, 2003

I went to the dump. It smelled so bad and it looked just like all the dumps in movies. Big piles of junk everywhere! At the front of it were all these dump trucks and at the back, just sand, dirt and dust. There were cardboard boxes that were people’s houses. Everywhere, there were families scavenging to find cardboard boxes, cans, and anything else that would get them some money for dinner.

I helped pick up cardboard for a man who had two little kids. He and his wife used to have jobs, but they lost them.

When I went back on the bus, I felt like I was going to cry. At first, I thought it was only sand in my eyes, but it wasn’t.

I write about all of this from the mall. The people here look so different. They probably don’t know about the dump. I never thought about dumps in the U.S. until today. I feel so bad that I never thought about that before. I never realized that some people lived their lives picking up the same thing everyday, with no break. One thing keeps popping into my head, “One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.” It’s so true! All the trash I throw away is how someone eats at night. Just think of all the trash in Ecuador that so many people sort through everyday. Just think of how happy those people would be to find an OK pair of shoes or food still in a container.

I’m about to cry again. This time, I know it’s not from the sand.

—Katie Thomson, grade 8, Pennsylvania.
It was getting dark outside.

"I have to go now," I told Devi. "Bye!"

She waved back. I went home delighted that I had made a new friend, but sad that her owner treated her badly.

The next day, I went to the apartment terrace to enjoy the breeze. There, I saw Devi scrubbing the floor.

"Hi!" I exclaimed.

"Shhh!" she whispered. "If my owner hears us, she will beat me!"

Surprised by Devi's remark, I turned away and trudged downstairs. I thought about what Devi had said. I realized that she must be a servant, which is why her mean owner could treat her so badly. I had to help her. I ran to my mom and told her Devi's problem.

"If Devi's owner is really very cruel," she said, "then I'll go and talk to her."

That evening, Devi knocked on our door.

"Can I use the telephone?" she asked me.

"Sure!" I told her.

Mom heard us and asked, "Is there a problem?"

"I want to call my parents so that they will come and take me back home!" she choked.

My mom nodded and led Devi to our telephone.

She tried calling her parents many times, but there was a problem and she couldn't reach them. Looking sad, she thanked us and ran upstairs before her owner realized that she was gone.

After an hour, we heard Devi talking to her owner. The lady sounded harsh and scolded Devi, slapping her twice. She did this because Devi was a servant and wasn't supposed to talk to anybody. Devi cried for an hour from the painful slaps, until she fell asleep.
My mom and I felt Devi’s misery, so the next morning, we went to the lady’s house and chatted. She was kind and gave me chocolates, but I still didn’t like her. Her face was very wrinkled, but fair. Her thin strands of hair were pulled back into a bun. Her narrow lips were covered in dark red lipstick.

Mom discussed how Devi wanted to go home. I crossed my fingers, hoping that the lady wouldn’t beat Devi again. After a long chat with her, Mom and I headed home.

That night, I slept well, grateful that Devi wasn’t weeping. I hoped she might have a chance to go back to her parents soon, and that I would be there to say goodbye.

Slam! It was the next morning. The door had shut, but who had opened it? I went to the living room and saw that my mom had come in.

“Where did you go this early in the morning, Mom?” I asked sleepily.

“I went upstairs to the lady’s apartment to wish Devi a safe trip to Andhra, where her parents live,” she told me.

I couldn’t believe she was leaving so soon! I ran toward the door to say goodbye to Devi. My mom stopped me.

“It’s too late, she already left,” she whispered.

A tear trickled down my cheek. I couldn’t say goodbye to Devi and her beautiful smile.

Later that week, I took some chapatis to the old owner’s house and thanked her for taking Devi back to Andhra. As I reached the house, I saw an unfamiliar girl smiling at me while polishing the lady’s shoes at the doorstep.

—Smitha Sarma, Grade 6, California.

Smitha adds: “I know many kids don’t even know that there is child labor in the world. I wrote this story to help them realize how serious the problem is. I was born in India and follow the Hindu religion. I can read and write in my native language, Tamil. In my story, all the characters live in South India and speak Tamil.”

"Dedicated to the ones who feel like they have no meaning."

The sky turned black
And down came a cloud
And through the cloud came a lightning bolt
And through the lightning bolt came a girl
Then the girl walked across the land
And took a stand
When she tried to meet people
They treated her as if she were invisible
And the ones that saw her
Seemed to see right through her
She tried to tell them the tales of her life
But it was as if they couldn’t hear her
So she returned to the sky
The sky that was black
And went up into the lightning bolt
And into the cloud
And into the sky
Because she felt she had no meaning.
—Emily Blythe Dietrich, 11, Illinois.

The Yellow One
A field of red roses
You’re a follower
not a leader
Yet, the yellow one
catches your eye.
—Emily Hitechev, 13, Pennsylvania.

REMEMBER, PLAYING A VIDEO GAME IS FUN FOR A LITTLE WHILE, BUT HELPING THE WORLD BE A BETTER PLACE STAYS WITH YOU FOREVER.
—Steven Fawcett, 13, Pennsylvania.
Ryan's Well: A Boy Brings Clean Water to Ugandan Children

Ryan Hreljac is a boy with a dream: clean water for everyone in Africa.

Ryan began his fundraising activities when he was six years old after his first grade teacher explained how thousands of children living in poor areas of Africa died each year from lack of clean drinking water. She also told them how $70 paid for a well, and from that moment on, Ryan Hreljac was on a mission.

To support him, Ryan’s mother drew a red thermometer on a piece of paper with 35 lines across it, each line representing two dollars. For every two dollars earned from doing chores or getting good grades, Ryan could fill in a line and put his earnings into an old cookie tin. Ryan's cookie tin grew heavier by the week, until finally he had collected $75 in coins, which he presented to WaterCan, a nonprofit agency that provides clean water and sanitation to people in developing countries. That’s when Ryan found out that while $70 would buy a hand pump, it actually cost ten times that amount to drill a well.

That didn’t discourage Ryan one bit. He’d simply do more chores.

Inspired by Ryan’s determination and hard work, friends, family and community members soon began to send donations to WaterCan, and before long the organization had received enough money to build Ryan’s well. Ryan and his mother then returned to WaterCan’s offices to meet with Gizaw Shibru, director for Uganda at Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR). Ryan had many questions for Shibru, like how long it would take to build the well, where it would be built, and whether it could be built near a school to supply clean water to the children.

CPAR eventually chose to build the well near Angolo Primary School in Otwal subcounty of Northern Uganda. The school was in an area where the closest water source was a swamp more than 300 miles away. Many children there suffered from diarrhea, typhoid and other deadly water-borne diseases.

Ryan listened attentively as Shibru described how it took 20 people 10 days or more to build a well because they lacked the proper tools. Drilling equipment would allow them to make many more wells, but the type of drill they needed cost $25,000.

Ryan came away from that meeting with an even greater resolve. He would raise $25,000 for the drilling rig.

As time passed, Ryan’s fundraising efforts began to draw media attention. Following an article in a local newspaper, donations began to arrive from across Canada. Ryan’s classmates were also eager to help. A watercan was placed in his classroom so kids could start contributing toward a new well.

By now, Ryan wanted to visit the well sites and meet the children who drew clean water from them. Because it was so costly, the trip to Uganda would have to wait a couple of years. All that changed, however, when a neighbor donated his airmiles to Ryan. Finally, Ryan and his parents were able to fly to Uganda.

Ryan and his family arrived in Angolo where they were greeted by some 5,000 children. There, beside Angolo Primary School’s vegetable garden, Ryan drank cool, clear, clean water from the well he helped build—a well that bears his name etched in stone.

Through his perseverance and example to others, Ryan and those he inspired have helped raise more than $90,000 for new drilling and well construction equipment in Uganda. This money has funded the construction of more than 30 wells.

Bravo Ryan!

For more information visit: www.ryanswell.ca, www.watercan.com, or www.cpar.ca

—Anne Renaud, Westmount, Quebec, Canada.
It makes me sad that some of my friends don't like other friends of mine. Soon my fifth grade class is going ice skating. I want to play with all of my friends, not just a few who always like to stick together. What should I do if I want to play with all of my friends? —Allison.

Dear Allison: Thank you for your insightful description of the social scene you experience in your classroom. Might the group of students who like to stick together feel safer when they remain close to each other?

You mention, “I have many friends in school, I really love school... I love my family.” Might you have less need to stick closely to a tight group of girls than some others in your class? I can well imagine that your natural inclination to enjoy a great variety of friends might prove to be a welcome gift to many classmates. That thought just might not have occurred to them!

I heartily encourage you to follow your natural instincts to mix freely among your classmates. I could see an advantage if you develop a pattern of inviting individual girls quite frequently off and on to your house or for two of you to engage in some activity together. For example:

- Ask someone over for a cooking adventure. Know the recipe. Have the ingredients prepared.
- Learn to make beaded bracelets or necklaces. Invite someone who'd like to learn to make them.
- Do you like to play rummy or solitaire? Teach someone in your class.
- Do you like to draw pictures of flowers, clouds, your dog, cat or bird? Create an art gallery.

It is easier to take up playing with someone in a large group, if you have previously played together as a two-some.

Now a suggestion with a very different approach.

The plan is to create a warm and friendly spirit among all members of the class, as follows:

- The day before you all go ice skating, bake a batch of brownie mix.
- Cut and wrap a brownie for all students in your class.
- Label each brownie with a name tag complimenting each student.
- Hopefully, having shared the brownies and the verbal compliments, the spirit of togetherness and sharing may permeate among the classmates on the skating rink.

In Peace,

Hanna

Send your questions or comments to:
Dear Hanna c/o Skipping Stones
P. O. Box 3939, Eugene, OR 97403
Good Night, Family

I all but lived there. It was an hour’s drive, longer when there was traffic (and there almost always was), but when I was there, I wasn’t Rachel’s best friend anymore. I was her parents’ fifth child. And when they all piled into the taxi to go to the dentist, I sat on Simone’s lap and we ate yogurt from the same container. Once I even had my teeth examined, and got a sugar-free lollipop. Rachel’s uncles knew my name, sent me cards on my birthday and one cold afternoon her mother took us to get our ears pierced, and she grabbed my hand before I could start to cry. If I were there for Shabbos, her dad would bless us before Kiddush, his chapped hands extended over my head as much as Isaac’s. My lit candle flickered evenly between Abbie’s and Rachel’s. Lila Tov, good night her mother would say. And kiss both our foreheads. But it’s been a while. A torn blue postcard from New Zealand tells me how warm the water is, whispers how far apart we’ve grown. Lila Tov, Mishpacha. Good Night, good night.

—Mariel Boyarsky, 16, New York.

My Stand

My pencil in my hand
Making a new stand
Reading the words I wrote
wearing a new coat
Buying a new book
Wearing a better look
Sharing all my glory
Writing a new story

All the warmness inside
makes me want to hide
From all the hatred and jealousy
Please don’t yell at me
I feel my pride inside
Loving the new coat
Reading the words I wrote
Pencil in my hand
This is my stand

—Akeila Jones-Calvin, 11, Wisconsin.

I Remember

I remember the suffering of my dying people
I remember the whispers of my friends
I remember the smell of rice
I remember the footsteps of my grandfather
I remember my heart beating for fear
I remember a bomb coming through my stomach.


CATS

The cat’s blue eyes wander
as I hear her purring
and huffy breath blowing.
She turns to me. Her whiskers get in my mouth
and I gently feel her soft, velvety ears.

—Jessica Brown, 8, African American, Mississippi.

Nonviolence is the key to the house and the house is peace.

—Cole Austin, 13, WA.
It Takes But One

It takes but one night star
To light up the evening sky,
It takes but one small candle,
To make darkness shrink and die.

It takes but one small voice,
To make the music shine.
It takes but one note from a symphony
To make any man rejoice.

It takes but one small smile,
To brighten someone’s day.
It takes but one kind word,
To make someone feel ok.

It takes but one person,
To make a whole crowd laugh,
It takes but one small child,
To make an older one feel daft.

It makes but one difference,
Though it may not be much to see,
It makes the world a better place,
For everyone to be.


Glow

Sun-filtered branches,
A gust and the petals of trees
Gently tossing down.

—Carrie Purta, 13, Pennsylvania.

Never Alone

You’re not alone in the world of fears,
Of hope, and joy; there’s always someone near
Watching over us from what seems to be so far,
Way past the moon, the sun, the stars.
This someone watches us night and day,
While we work and sleep and play.

So don’t be afraid when you think you’re alone,
You’re not and never will be.
If you travel worldwide and beyond,
Farther than the eye can see,
Someone will always be with you,
Someone inside of you and inside of me.

—Brianna Pitino, 12, Connecticut.

• • • Health Rocks! • • •

A Vegetarian Way of Life

Can people live without eating meat or fish? If you think “no,” then you’re probably wrong!

There are many vegetarians who don’t eat meat, fish, or eggs. Many Hindus believe in Karma: For every action, there is a reaction. If you cause pain and suffering to other living beings, whether human or animal, you will have to go through a similar pain and suffering in return. Therefore, they choose not to eat meat, fish or poultry.

People who worship in Lord Krishna believe that foods come in three modes: ignorance, passion and goodness. Foods in the mode of ignorance include meat, fish and eggs. Foods in the mode of passion are onion, garlic, and extremely bitter, sour, salty and pungent foods. These foods cause distress, misery and disease.

Foods in the mode of goodness are vegetables, fruits, grains, nuts and milk products. These foods make you live a longer and healthier life, purifies your mind, gives strength to the body, and makes you feel happy.

The “Hare Krishnas” only eat the foods in the mode of goodness. But, first they offer it to Lord Krishna. They believe that the killing of any form of life, even that of a plant, is sinful. But Krishna, who is the Supreme Lord, frees them from the sin of killing plants by accepting their food offerings.

—Monica Prasad, California.

TREES

The
Tree is
Still like a
Person sleeping
It stands tall like
A giant, it lives among
Many, many giants, in the
Middle
of a
Huge
Forest.

—Zack Peter, Tahoma Junior High, Washington.
As Thick As Blood

From the moment I left Korean soil in 1993, I was deprived of what most seven-year-old girls would be treasuring at that age: A relationship with a grandparent. However, when my family and I met Audrey in her beautiful garden, I was given back more than I had hoped for. What started off as a fortuitous meeting, a polite “How are you?” as we passed her working in her garden led to a peculiar bond that was as thick as blood; a grandparent-granddaughter relationship between a blue eyed, thickly Australian-accented, childless lady and a shy, black-haired, Korean girl.

I clearly remember when I first met Audrey. It was a beautiful summer day, but I was a little overwhelmed by my new environment. I found myself surrounded by rows of dainty houses and spacious roads, instead of the familiar twenty-five story apartments and the crowded streets of Seoul. During the exploration of our new Australian neighborhood, my family and I passed many houses. We stopped in front of a house that had a beautiful garden with flowers of every shade. An old lady in her seventies was out watering her flower beds. My dad started a casual conversation with her, and the friendly lady picked a purple pansy for me. I received it silently. The next day, Dad and I went back to her house to show the gratitude that I had been too shy to express the day before.

My visit to her house did not stop there. Her kindness opened my timid heart, and starting from the day we first met, until the day our family left Australia to return to Korea, I was her “Grand-daughter Minhee” and she was my “Grandma Audrey.” During the five years, my Australian grandma fulfilled my emptiness in her own Aussie way. She taught me about a love that could close a gap as wide as the ocean that separated Australia and Korea.

I often bring to mind the beanstalk Audrey helped me plant for my second grade science project, nine years ago, in Australia. When I went to seek help, Audrey wholeheartedly gave me a lesson in her backyard, assisting me mix the fertilizers and plant the bean seed carefully in a plastic bottle. The beanstalk grew so fast and it was displayed on the classroom windowsill. It stretched up so high it needed replanting into a larger pot.

It is those little, everyday things I remember and cherish the most. When I got into a gloomy state because I had a fight with my best friend at school, Grandma took her false teeth out and made funny faces until I laughed again. However, there were also times when she was as firm as any grandparent could be to a grandchild. She spanked me when I hastily crossed a busy road, and introduced me into the strict world of etiquette, often scolding me when I forgot to say “thank you.”

Grandma’s fervent love for Australian football was contagious, and I came to love the sport with an ardor I had never felt before. On Saturdays, I went to her house to watch the Essendon Bombers play on TV and listen to her live commentary. Sometimes, I went to the stadium with her and cheered crazily for the Bombers, waving our red and black scarves in the air.

Through my bond with Audrey, I learned that when two people overlook their differences, their human longing to love and to be loved ties them together in an untainted relationship. I could, without doubt, feel through her words and actions that I was precious to her. Often times when I embraced Grandma and said, “I love you, Grandma,” she bent her stiff waist to look into my eyes and replied with a smile, “I love you too, darlin’.” Her sincere blue eyes always convinced me that she was looking into the brown eyes of a granddaughter.

—Minhee Son, 17, Surrey, BC, Canada.

“When I left Korea for Australia, I felt as if I was a tree being uprooted out of my homeland soil. I lived in Australia for five years... I wanted to share this intercultural experience with others in hopes that the readers, whether they are students at a culturally diverse school or not, will open their hearts and minds to such relationships.”
In Korea, long, long ago, there lived a man named Jung. Jung was very poor. One day, while walking along a country road, he spied a plum tree in a farmer's field. The tree was loaded with beautiful purple plums. Jung's mouth watered. 

"Oh!" he cried. "If I could have only one of those plums. I am so hungry."

Jung made his way across the field. He picked a plum from a low hanging branch. Then, hurriedly, he ran back to the road and sat down to enjoy the delicious fruit.

Suddenly the farmer was upon him screaming, "Thief! Thief!"

Jung was arrested and given a very large fine. "Your honor," Jung told the judge, "I have no money."

"Then 10 years in prison!" declared the judge.

Left in a cold, dark cell, Jung sat on the damp dirt floor and sobbed. He put his hands in his pockets to warm them. In one pocket, he felt something. He pulled out the plum pit. This gave him an idea. He called to the jailer, "I must see the king!" he exclaimed. "At once!"

The jailer laughed, "Why would the king see an old vagrant like you?"

"Please," begged Jung. "I have something of great value to give him."

Jung was at last taken to the king. "What is this thing of great value that you have for me?" asked the king in a very stern voice.

Jung handed the pit to the king. "What is this?" the king said, enraged. "A plum pit?!!"

"Oh, but your majesty, this is a magic plum pit. It will grow into a tree that bears golden fruit."

"If that is true," the king said, "why would you not plant it yourself?"

"Because," stated Jung, "it will only grow for someone who is honest. Someone who has never stolen or cheated."

He lowered his head. "I am a thief, your Majesty. I have stolen many times when I was hungry. And it was only recently that I acquired the plum pit."

He smiled at the king. "But you, sir, are the king. You have never stolen anything or been dishonest."

The king lowered his head also. "I—I—" he stammered. "Perhaps, sometime in my life I—I may have stolen. As a young boy, of course."

"Then," said Jung, turning to the king's minister, "you are surely an honest man. Would you plant the plum tree for the king?"

The minister's face turned red. "Your Majesty, I must confess that once or twice I have taken more money from the coffer than I reported to you. I am deeply sorry."

"Call my general!" ordered the king. "I know he is an honest man."

But the general admitted, sadly, that at times he had cheated the soldiers out of some of their pay. Several other royal officials were called upon, but each one was forced to admit that because of some dishonest deed, the plum pit would not grow for him. Jung looked around the room and saw the king and all of his men hanging their heads in shame.

"Why is it, sirs," he said at last, "that all of you have stolen and cheated and have never been punished, while I was sentenced to 10 years in prison for stealing something to eat when I was hungry?"

"You are right," said the king. "I will see that you are pardoned at once. And I will also see that you are given a position in my service."

As Jung walked out of the castle and into the courtyard, he whistled a merry tune. He threw the plum pit over the wall.

—Retold by Bonnie Highsmith Taylor, Lebanon, OR.
"Growing up in Wisconsin, I had a lot of contact with my German grandparents but never met the Korean side until I was nine...Diversity, within one family and within one person, is always cause for wonder and celebration."

After the picnicking at the foot of the mountain was over, it was time to begin our climb and the real business of the day. The sun was hot on my nine-year-old head as I joined my parents, sister, and about a dozen of our Korean relatives, who led the way along the steep, dirt path up the mountain.

This was my first visit to Korea. Having been raised in the Midwest (where the land is flat and the people are blond) by an American mother and a Korean father, I was amazed by Korea's immense mountainscapes and the millions of people who looked like me. I had grown up speaking English, completely immersed in American culture, but now I was meeting a whole other world that was also a part of me, too. I wanted desperately for my relatives to think that I was a good, polite girl, not a rude foreigner.

Today's pilgrimage was a visit to the family graves. My father had not been back home in Korea for 26 years, since he came to the United States to go to college. His mother and two of his brothers had died during that time. Now we were going to demonstrate our love and reverence for these relatives by paying our respects to their graves. This ritual grew out of ancient Korean practices of ancestor worship.

Single-file, we all helped each other scramble up the mountainside. The summer monsoon rains were late this year, so the midday heat was dry, and the dirt was crumbly underfoot. Back home, I was used to flat graveyards with carefully manicured grass, but in Korea, the flat ground is so precious for growing rice that no one would think of wasting it on a graveyard.

When we reached the first grave, a steep, grass-covered mound almost as tall as I, everyone immediately went to work. We pulled out unruly weeds and cleared long grass away from the headstone so that my grandparents' names could be clearly read. I saw other names on the backside of the stone as well. My father told me that those were the names of all their sons. Daughters did not count because they went to join their husbands' families. I felt sorry as my father has two daughters; no sons! I knew I'd have to find a way to carry the family name as well as a son.

Once the gravesite had been cleaned, we all formed a long line facing the mound. The adults began to chant prayers in unison, led by my aunt, the nun, with her rosary and prayer book. I wished I could follow what was being said and I hoped I would not do something terribly wrong.

My father and his brother and sister began to cry. This was a time to remember and to mourn again. I felt horribly lost and mute. Something momentous was happening, and I was not able to participate in it. I wondered if Grandma and Grandpa were looking down on us as we came to visit them. I realized that I was being introduced to them for the first time, even though they had both died before I was born. What did they think of me? Who was this granddaughter who did not speak Korean and came from so far away?

In unison, we all began to bow before the grave. Together we knelt and bent forward to touch our hands and then foreheads to the ground. We stood up and repeated the elaborate bow several more times. The crackly grass pricked my face and smelled sweet. It felt good to make this full-body gesture of respect before my grandparents—this they would understand from me, their anxious but obedient granddaughter who had come to wish them well with all her heart. A great sense of peace filled me. No doubt, it was a gift from my grandparents, who were, after all, glad to see me.

Now I am a grown-up English teacher in Boston, Massachusetts. I visited Korea two more times after that first trip, but I have not been back to the graves again. Like me, my future children will not grow up with the Korean language and culture, but they too will be taken on a pilgrimage to bow with love and respect at the feet of their great-grandparents.

—Elisa Oh, English teacher, Salem, Massachusetts.

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Skipping Stones

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**Traditional Korean Music**

If you have any Korean friends, perhaps you’ve been exposed to “K-Pop,” the nickname for Korean pop music. The catchy choruses sound like those sung by Britney Spears or the Backstreet Boys, but Korean music was not always so westernized. In fact, Western music was not introduced to this part of Asia until 1885.

However, *Kugak*, or traditional Korean music, dates as far back as the 3rd century AD. There are two types of *Kugak*: *Chong-ak* (music for the elite) and *Sog-ak* (music for commoners).

*Chong-ak* refers to the elegant music style deemed proper for the Korean nobility, according to Confucian philosophy. Court music was characterized by a slow and simple tempo that created a solemn, calm atmosphere. Some have described *Chong-ak* as “contemplative like a long breath.”

Musicians performed on instruments created from natural materials—wind instruments made from wood and stringed instruments with strings of silk, not wire. Their warm, subtle tones added to the grandeur of orchestral pieces.

In contrast, *Sog-ak*, the folk music of farmers, was lively and emotional. Performances involved singing, dancing and instruments such as barrel drums and gongs. A particularly appealing type of *Sog-ak* was the *Plansori*, an opera-like production sung by one singer-storyteller. The *Plansori* consisted of narrations between songs and physical motions illustrating the story.

Traditional Korean music continues to be admired despite the popularity of Western-flavored pop. Ensembles around the globe hold concerts showcasing a rich collection of folk tunes and orchestral arrangements. Who knows? Maybe an ensemble will visit a city near you!

—Jennifer Kye, 17, Virginia.

“I was born in S. Korea and lived there until I was five. I’ve lost touch with my cultural heritage. I’d love to teach English to Korean children and tell them about Western culture while they tell me about theirs.”

**The Five Best Korean Foods**

I want to talk about Korean foods. Most Korean foods are spicy. For example, *kim-chi*. There are over 50 types, but the usual kind is made out of Chinese cabbage. Many Americans can’t eat it because it’s too spicy.

There are five foods that Koreans like best. The first one is called *bul-go-gi* and it has beef made in a special way that no other culture does.

The second is rice cakes. There are more than 99 types of rice cakes. They’re kind of chewy sometimes, and really good. On New Year’s Day or the Korean Thanksgiving, we have special kinds of rice cakes.

The third popular dish is called *gal-bi*, also a beef dish.

The fourth one is *bin-dae-duck*—green bean pancakes. It’s thinner than an American pancake and it’s better than you might think.

And the fifth is, of course, *kim-chi*!

Koreans always eat rice at breakfast, lunch and dinner. That’s our way of eating. We eat foods that don’t have too much fat and we usually don’t eat hamburgers or pizza.

—Eun-Byeol Goh, 11, Seoul, S. Korea, was in Oregon for two years. Photo: Eun with older sister, Ara.
A Naure Area in Gangwon-do Province

(Phot: Nina Forsburg)

A Glimpse of Korea

Kimchi Jars for Sale!
Kimchi is a popular side dish made from fermented cabbage and spicy hot red peppers.

A traditionally-dressed family enjoys a festival.

Many students in Korea learn Tae Kwan Do, the national sport. Students wait to take their "Belt Tests" for a higher rank.

(Phot: Nina Forsburg)
During the International Drum Festival in Seoul, teenagers perform a ritual farmer’s dance.

A girl wears a Hanbok for the Fall Harvest holiday, Chusok. Her relatives place money in her purse.

Shirim, the traditional Korean wrestling, during a Sports Day at Sogwipo Daeshin Middle School.

(A Photo: Nina Forsburg)

A Candyman in Insadong shopping district

Children curiously look out of a Korean wedding carriage prior to a traditional ceremony in Cheonju.

All photos (except otherwise noted) by Greg Johnston, Decatur, Indiana. Greg taught ESL (English as a Second Language) in Korea for three years.
I am sitting at the computer, ready to interview my mom about her struggles coming to America. She is sitting on the couch across the room. We are positioned in the manner of patient and therapist. Truthfully, I’m apprehensive about interviewing her. I’m afraid that if I learn anything outside of her being a mom, then it will force me to be more sympathetic and understanding towards her. I ready myself to put an invisible wall between my mom’s story and me.

I feel guilty pretending to be stoic, but I change my mind. Maybe that is what I need—a reality check that forces me to understand that my mom is not an automaton that tends to my every whim, but rather a human being with emotions and thoughts. So, I begin to question her.

“Mama, why did you come to America?”

Since I was little, I always sensed the weight of extra stress on her shoulders. I always wondered, “Why work so hard here, why not move back to Korea?”

But Koreans said America was a place where dreams come true. My mom came to America because my dad wanted to. As my dad explained how charming America was, my mom never considered the life of an immigrant.

She was on top of the world—young, employed as a respectable teacher, and in love. She had studied English and even trained to become an American translator for the Olympics of 1988. Foreigners told her she spoke English very well, so she believed it would be easy to adjust to a new life.

“But Mom, didn’t anybody stop you from going?” I asked next.

She remembers her grandfather telling her, “Your roots are established here. Don’t go!”

Her older brother, who had already moved to America also told her not to come. He said life was too difficult and stressful.

She remembers thinking, “Why don’t people want me to go to America? America is such a great place! They are just being selfish. They want all the success for themselves!”

So, my mom ended up coming. She needed a job. However, her only job opportunities were to be a cashier, grocery store helper or a seamstress. She needed to start her own business.

Mom’s first “home” was a small, smelly, dirty, absolutely disgusting apartment in Flushing, Queens. Four people shared the cramped and uncomfortable one-bedroom apartment. She recalls asking herself, “Where is America? This is not America!”

“It was like living in a cardboard box,” she said, because she had no television or radio and she couldn’t communicate with people.

And, English proved to be an obstacle. One day, she wanted to go sightseeing in Manhattan.

“Which train do you take to MahnHahTahn?” she asked five people with her heavy accent.

Each person had no idea what she was trying to say and she became frustrated. Finally, one person did understand and said, “Oh, you mean ManHATtan,” and directed her.

She would never forget that experience. It made her realize that her spoken English was horrible, and that she needed to improve.

I laughed and said, “Mom, but you still say MahnHahTahn!”

In 1986, she moved to New York City and started her own dry-cleaning business. She said the adjustment was very difficult. In Korea, when she had been a teacher, she used to eat one bowl of rice, but in America she ate three bowls of rice to get the amount of energy needed to work.

I asked, “Why didn’t you go back to Korea?”

She said that she stayed because of my younger sister and me. In Korea, education is very strict and stressful. America would be an easier place to conquer once we had an education, she felt.

My last question was, “What do you want to do for yourself in the future?”

She said she wants to live “a small life,” near a shrine. She wants to be closer to God, and to make every place she’s encountered a better one. If she won the lotto, she would give the money to Nyack
Hospital, where my sister and I were born and where my grandfather died, to the library which helped us learn about American traditions, and to the church which helped her keep her faith in times of hardship.

My mom equates her life with that of a Himalayan mountain-climber. She started out as a skinny, frail, naive bride, ready to conquer the world. On her way to the peak, she’s gotten lost and experienced snowstorms and avalanches. But she has enjoyed the view, the fresh air and the stars. Today, she says she’s climbing down that mountain. She’s a new woman. A woman with strong legs, a wide perspective, a big heart and lots of gray hair. She’s ready now to conquer a whole new universe.


Koreans used the Chinese language before the Korean language was developed. King Segong recognized the problem with Chinese at that time: Only the rich people could study it and there weren’t many rich people. The poor did not know how to read or write.

So, from 1427, until 1449, the king and his scholars developed the Korean language. There are 10 simple vowels and 14 consonants in Hangeul, the Korean Alphabet.

Here’s how they did it: In Chinese or Japanese, the writing system uses pictures for words. However, the king and his scholars made the Korean language differently. Instead of pictures, it uses phonetic symbols, making it easier to pronounce and write, allowing everyone to learn it. However, many Korean people also learn Chinese, too, because it is a tradition.

—Eun-Byeol Goh, 11, Seoul, South Korea.

The Freedom of a Cup of Coffee

Because there are more days to go than days that I’ve lived, Even though I find myself as a loser, I’m not sad.

Yesterday has already passed. Today, already passing And tomorrow, coming soon.

Hope that today is not like yesterday, that tomorrow is not like today. In dawn with fog, if I have time to enjoy a cup of coffee and see the sky. Even though I find myself as a loser, I’m not sad.

Did you know... That a mosquito can move its wings 1,000 times in one second? That a certain bird can recognize leaves that are one km away? We are living too busily, We don’t know the smell of coffee or a rainbow after it has rained.

Even though I look like a loser, Because I start a new day with the time to drink coffee And end it with looking at the night sky, Waiting for today to be better than yesterday, And for tomorrow to be better than today, I have the freedom.

—James (Seung-Bum) Chai, 15, Enchun, Korea. Translated by Eun-Byeol Goh, 11, Korea.
My friend and her daughter in their tangerine orchard.

A rocky shoreline outside Sogwipo City, Jeju.

Look on a map and you will find a fairly large island south of the Korean peninsula called Jeju Island. If you are at the southern tip of Korea, you can take a seven hour boat ride through choppy waters to get there, or you can take a short airplane ride. Many Koreans think it is the most beautiful part of Korea, and so it is a popular vacation and honeymoon place. About 550,000 people live on Jeju. For one year, I also lived there as an English teacher at a middle school, and I learned a little about why Jeju’s culture and nature are distinct from the mainland.

Jeju is famously known as the island of three manys: rocks, women, and wind. The “rock” part comes from Jeju’s unusual volcanic formations. Occupying the center of the island is Korea’s highest mountain, Mount Halla, an inactive volcano. There are also over 300 small, secondary volcanoes scattered all over the landscape.

Jeju is also known for its women because at one time it was the only place in Korea where a visitor would often notice that there were more women than men. This occurred since many Jeju men were squid fishermen who were out at sea, while women were commonly visible working hard outdoors as divers or farming the fields.

Though I never noticed this personally, I was often told that people from Jeju speak more loudly than other Koreans. It is an extremely windy place and so the Jeju people who were farmers had to speak loudly over the winds to hear one another while working in the fields. Their speech is also unique because of a Mongolian-influenced dialect. Jeju was used for a time by Mongolian forces for horse raising, and the Mongolian language became entangled with Korean. Even today, a person from Seoul, Korea’s capital, may sometimes have a hard time understanding a friend from Jeju! A Jeju person may say moosa? if they want to ask “why?” while a person from Seoul would say wayo?

For me, two of the most memorable foods of Jeju Island were the delicious squid brought in daily by the fishermen and the tangerines that grow abundantly all over Jeju. Sometimes I would see squid drying in the sun like clothes on a clothesline, and my host family showed me how to grill this dried squid over a little flame for a crispy snack.

Around the city I lived in, tangerine orchards produced the best tangerines I have ever tasted in my life. I quickly learned that the smallest, bumpiest ones are tastiest. I peeled so many tangerines during the winter that I turned the palms of my hands yellow!

I can never forget my year in Jeju that I feel lucky to have been able to experience a little bit of its nature and culture. Now, whenever I walk past a world map, I stop for an instant to put my finger on Jeju, and for that moment I can see the rocks, feel the wind, and taste the squid and tangerines again in my imagination.

—Nina Forsberg, grad. student, Univ. of Oregon.
The Strength of a Haenyo Diver

Seven hours south of the Korean peninsula by boat, there is an island called Jeju-do. This windy, volcanic island has a culture unique from the mainland, and the people have a distinct dialect from its past as a Mongolian horse raising region. Because it is an island, many people work directly with the sea for their living. The Jeju-do people who depend on the sea need enormous strength of character and hardiness, as the water gets very cold in the winter and the sea often gets stormy. Among those who must be brave are a group of women divers, most over 50, who dive for seafood year round.

While I spent a year on this island teaching at a school, I met one woman diver, a sixty-four year old grandmother. I was invited to spend the Fall Harvest Holiday, Chusok, with her family. The evening before the holiday, she showed me how to make a traditional dessert by shaping rice dough into full moon shapes. Though I knew her work as a haenyo diver requires incredible discipline and hardiness, she looked far from rugged as I watched her forming the moons. There were gentle wrinkles extending downward from the outer corners of her eyes caused by the pull of her diving mask year after year. It was hard to remember that the very hands that were kneading the dough tirelessly and the thumbs that poked into it leaving perfectly indented moons behind, were the same ones that, 20 feet under water, catch octopus and feel the contours of the ocean floor for abalone and oysters. Even in cold winter waters, she dives with only goggles and a simple black wetsuit and she can hold her breath for minutes. Her body and character have been molded by the demands of the natural environment. Behind her outward softness, I knew she had an inner core as hard as the lava cliffs that characterize the island. Otherwise, she would not be able to wake up on cold January mornings and get ready to dive while the rest of the family is still sleeping.

While Jeju-do used to have plenty of haenyo divers, many young women no longer choose this profession because of its demanding nature and the changing times. I am glad I got to meet this diver. Her soft but strong presence gives a face and heartbeat to the determination that a woman’s mind is capable of and the great feats that a woman can accomplish.

—Nina Forsberg, graduate student at University of Oregon.
Asians like me are often asked, "What are you?"

Most naturally, we respond, "American."

However, the questioner, dissatisfied and confused, usually repeats, "No, but what are you?" Sometimes, we are asked if we can speak English, for no particular reason. Our yellow skin seems to automatically create the assumption that we are unable to comprehend the English language. It is at times like these that we question what a "true American" is.

The media has created an impression that all Asians have an irregular English accent and a diet that consists solely of rice, sushi and kimchi. We ridicule the media for exaggerating the differences between Asians and others, and for painting an unrealistic image of a typical Asian American person.

My mom told me that she decided to have her child in America because she wanted me, unlike herself, to be accepted into American society. She went through too much hardship trying to find her place here. Ironically, even though I have lived in New York my entire life, I still find it difficult to fit in because of my yellow skin.

However, Asians can be critical, too. In international events such as the Olympics, my Korean friends see my neutrality between opposing countries as a sign of disrespect and disinterest in "my country." Comments like these bring much conflict in my mind because I'm not positive what my country is. Is it the country of my ancestors, the country connected to my yellow skin? Or is it the country I was born and raised in, the one I am a citizen of?

Asians will also be critical of us Asian-Americans, because we can't speak our ancestral language or don't follow certain cultural expectations. Occasionally, my Korean friends will ridicule small errors I make in speaking or writing in Korean. They give me an awkward look when I ask the definition of a certain Korean word. They underestimate the challenges of living in one country and learning the language of another. Ignoring the fact that I've never lived in Asia, they think I should be able to speak the language of my ancestors perfectly.

There are also disagreements in ideas and opinions. For example, bowing does not fit my personality. I would never find myself bowing to an older friend or showing them more respect than I would to any other friend. My opinion leads to my older friends thinking lowly of me.

Through all the confusion and displacement, I can still say that I'm proud to be Asian and American. Although sometimes I resent my position, I know I have the one privilege that many can never experience—to be connected to two totally different worlds.

—Jeannette Park, senior, Korean American, N.Y.

"I speak both Korean and English fluently. In school, I'm learning French and Spanish, and I studied Japanese for a short time one summer in Korea. I'm very interested in different languages and cultures; I hope one day to have a career involving my talents in each language."

Cultural Sensibilities II Art Exhibit

"Dream of Artist" watercolor by Ahn Nam Sook, see p. 26.
I first met Elizabeth through Tuesday's Child, a non-profit organization based in Los Angeles, CA, dedicated to meeting the needs of families living with HIV or AIDS. I interviewed her in hopes of making a difference in the importance of tomorrow. Through the challenges of skid row, single motherhood and then living with the HIV virus, Elizabeth is now a public speaker for Women Alive in Los Angeles. Her mission is “to open the window of optimism for those living with HIV.”

When asked, “What ought to be done that would really make a difference?” She replied, “The biggest thing is breaking the silence! Silence is the killer.”

Through “breaking the silence” in her own life, she has created a positive attitude that is shared with her daughter, Hezel.

Elizabeth has found the courage and strength to change her life, and to help women living with HIV. She stressed the importance of choosing one’s destiny and taking control of what might seem impossible.

Photo & text by Xavier Avila, Los Angeles, California.

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Skipping Stones

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Broken Beaks by Nathaniel Lachenmeyer, illust. by Robert Ingpen (Michelle Anderson). Through the relationship of a homeless man and a small sparrow, this thoughtful story shows that the homeless/mentally ill have feelings, dignity and moments of heroism like everyone else. Ages 5-9. ISBN: 0-85572-335-1.

Abraham Joshua Heschel: Man of Spirit, Man of Action by Or N. Rose (Jewish Publication Society). A biography of one of the most influential thinkers in modern Judaism, who walked with Dr. King in the 1965 Selma March, and wrote nearly two dozen books. Ages 12 and up. ISBN: 0-8276-0758-X.

One Stormy Night... by Yuichi Kimura, illust. by Hiroshi Abe (Kodansha International). The wry, charming tale of a hungry wolf (with a cane and a bad leg) and a billy goat who take shelter in a pitch-black hut during a thunderstorm and politely try to find out who the other is. Ages 4-10. ISBN: 4-7700-2970-5.


The Big Caribou Herd: Life in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge by Bruce Hiscock (Boyd’s Mills). This introduction to the natural history of the Refuge follows the migration cycle of the caribou. The panoramic watercolors perfectly capture the sweeping landscape. Ages 8-12. ISBN: 1-59078-010-8.


Elsina’s Clouds by Jeanette Winter (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). For hundreds of years, Basotho women in southern Africa have decorated the walls of their houses as prayers for rain. When little Elsina decorates this time, will it work too? Ages 4-8. ISBN: 0-374-32118-3.


The 2004 Skipping Stones Youth Honor Awards

The following students and a youth group are being honored for their creative works that promote an understanding of cultural diversity and ecological sensitivity. Each winner will receive a certificate, five multicultural and nature books, and a subscription to Skipping Stones magazine. Hearty Congratulations to—

* Erin Ichinotsubo, 8, Hawaii
* Alejandra Alvarez, grade 3, Florida
* Mel H. Goss, 9, Florida
* Genevieve Malkin, 12, California
* Yulya Sapelnikova, 12, Bologoe, Russia
* Vincent Salpietro, 14, Pennsylvania
* Jessica A. Kerr, 14, Idaho
* Jeremy Friehling, 15, New York
* Eva Kirilova, 15, Massachussetts
* Lauren Kelly-Chew, 17, Pennsylvania
* Youth Organization: Roots & Shoots, Arizona

Honorable Mentions

- Tae Keller, 10, Hawaii
- Sara Ellenberger, 11, Japan
- Lily Gil, 12, California
- Maggie Harpur, 14, Penn.
- Sara Lambert, 17, New York
- St. Joseph Catholic School, GA.

Save the Birds!

Dark night
the sad calls of owls
reverberating through the thick darkness
then the chirping of larks welcoming day
a whiz of fiery bird
a courting cardinal
gulls pecking at garbage
crows, like a streak of night in day
propelling strong wings
against cooling air
handsome jays,

flying to the sun with our shelled peanuts
mixing into the blue of the sky
until they disappear into a whirl of cloud.

—Mel H. Goss, 9, homeschooler, Florida.
As a part of his year-long study of birds, Mel has written and illustrated a guidebook to local birds.

Remember Me?

Remember me?
My name is Gossip.
I tell of things I've never seen
I ruin friendships, and I break hearts.
I follow you wherever you go,
I haunt you days and nights.
Before you spread what I have told you,
Think, it is fair, is it right?
If not don't say it,
Keep things for yourself,
If it ruins relationships, is it worth it?
The answer is NO,
Cause if you spread it,
Others will too,
And many friendships will be over with, through.
Maybe Yours!

—Sara Ellenberger, 11, Nishimachi Int'l. Sch., Japan.
When I was approaching my 13th birthday, my parents came to me with an idea to help out my community by going every Saturday to an old age living center called Aegis of San Rafael. Boy am I glad I did! Every Saturday all the very sweet people would greet me. Then I would go upstairs to assist and watch them play bingo. They were all so cute, some with bonnets, some with baseball hats, some with bald heads, and all of them with warm hearts where I could just feel the heat and love radiate out towards me.

At first I thought, “What is this place? Why are there old people sitting in chairs and talking about stuff I don’t understand?” But as I came in every week and helped them play Bingo, I started to know and get to love their personalities.

Elsa, an old lady with a very kind face and the shortest patience I had ever seen, moved towards me as I walked into the room. She had a walker and could not hear or speak loudly so I had to lean down to hear her, so that she could be heard by me and me alone. I could tell she had not many friends for she sat next to me and told me about her life. All the other women that were sitting around the table were not paying much attention to her, and when they spoke to her there was harshness in their voices.

Then there was Pam, a lady with a talent for making rapier quips. Even though she was said to be a hard lady to relate to, I liked her all the same. She was always kind to me and I appreciated that greatly. She had blackish hair and some chin hair for vanity had left her system a while ago. She had a grace about her I don’t think the others had, even though she was in a wheelchair. The way she talked, wheeled, and placed her chips on her bingo card were all with this grace that I really enjoyed watching.

There was also Jenny, a woman who held up the game with her stern and grounding voice, and yet her sweet, sweet face made up for all of that. I would have to say that she was the only person in that whole place that could have run for the first woman president. She was always ahead of the game and I thought that was really refreshing to see coming from an eighty-year-old.

Another character was the man that was in his room screaming for his dead wife while we were playing bingo. You could hear his sharp, heart-piercing cries through the walls and it was hard even to hear his yelps. He would yell for “Help!” and yet nobody came. “Help!” “Help!” Each time it went deeper and deeper until you could feel his pain as if it were your own.

Last but not least, there was Joe, a man with a very pointy nose and no sense of humor whatsoever. He was a man that at the first sight of him, his face sent shivers up and down my back. Then I got to know him. And he turned out to be a really sweet guy. Yes, he had a pointy nose and yes, he was not funny at all, but he did have a good heart, and I think that is all that matters.

The people in this center were all so innocent and humble it touched me deeply. I am so glad I had that experience. It helped me grow in many more ways than one.

—Genevieve Malkin, 12, Marin Waldorf School, CA.

My Dream Neighborhood

Balled up newspaper pages lie strewn all over the ground. The stench of smelly shoes and old garbage causes you to hold your nose as you walk by. Rather than turning away from the messy sight, in my dream neighborhood, people carefully place their trash inside trash cans. Green grass grows uncluttered by popsicle wrappers, tissues and yesterday’s lunch, and the sweet scent of roses fills the air. Yellow, pink and purple flowers take the place of grays and brown.

In my dream neighborhood the streets are lined with sturdy oaks and tall pines. You walk along the smooth dirt paths instead of on cracked concrete and broken pillars.

Outside your house your neighbors rush by without a hello and barely manage a glance in your direction. In my dream neighborhood, people greet each other with a warm “hello,” ready to embrace you with open arms!

—Lily Gil, 12, Marin Waldorf School, California.
I Watch in the Leaves

I walk in the leaves.

The sidewalk is a stream I race down, a drum of leaves.
I see its color, fall down my skin.

It feels like a peach I skinned this morning. The juice rained on my hands and fell in my mouth. Thick sweetness raced down my throat, and colored in my leaving.

Thirst, an amber leaf, settles, gives the street a skin.
A picture splatter-painted with color.
A river flows down the sidewalk of rain.
The sky is a race of bright shadows falling.

My hands are gentle, and hold the pouring falls.
I leaf through layers of water racing, dancing as they hit the ground, drowning my skin.

Wetness reigns my body, soaks my clothes, has no color.

Kids say I was colored with permanent marker, but no one notices now.
A sun slowly joins the fall, drenches the rain, leafing through the skin of air, changing its race.

My feet are erased, color sits on my skin.
Fall covers me.
My shoes leaf through the orangeness. I open my mouth to drink the rain.

Music drops from the sky, races to my ear. Chalk runs onto the wet fall. I feel my dark, pruned color smiling. The ground-relieved.
Water coats my skin. I catch a leaf, shut my eyes, listen to the rain.

—Lauren Kelly-Chew, 17, Asian American, Penn.
**Roots & Shoots**

“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

—Jane Goodall

I belong to a youth organization, called **Roots & Shoots**, which was founded by Jane Goodall in 1991. Dr. Goodall believes that the future of the Earth is in the hands of our youth and it is our job to work towards a better future. Our mission is to promote understanding for the environment, animals and human community.

Our activities have included visiting the Whispering Hope Ranch (www.whisperinghoperanch.org) that provides a healing environment for individuals with physical or developmental challenges and provides a home for a diverse group of animals that have come from difficult circumstances. Our service was helping out with maintenance.

We have serviced our community through trash pick-ups which led us to explore our nearby landfill, where we learned how trash and recycling have large impacts on our planet. We took this information and applied it to our summit project, which we took to the North American Youth Summit 2004. This summit is for youth who demonstrate care and concern in the three areas of focus I have mentioned above.

We shared our knowledge about **Roots & Shoots**, met many people from around the U.S., and listened to Jane Goodall speak about her reason for hope. She also took a look at our project and encouraged each of us to follow our dreams. I believe that we can all become part of this journey to help our Earth, by making small differences in our lives every day.

At the summit, I participated in a nature walk with an environmentalist who shared tree identification, edible plants and wild life with us. We boarded a 150-passenger vessel of the Center for Coastal Studies. Our five-hour voyage out on Cape Cod taught us about marine mammal research and conservation and also the center’s whale rescue program. We had a brainstorming session with the Youth Leadership Council on how to improve our organization.

I am unschooled and I view life as my curriculum. This summit allowed me to follow my passion for the environment.

—Ariana Parra, 13, Arizona. (Photo: Ariana with Jane)

For information about how to get involved in **Roots & Shoots**, please visit www.janegoodall.org.

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**Four Who**

Winter wasting wildlife
Four facing familiar strife
Wailing winds, wondrous white
Frigid falling Fahrenheit

Four who stand, all and proud
Sessile, silent, and yet so loud
Four who live, remain and stay
Past the oldest who wither away

Mother Nature, mighty Earth
Every spring, a rebirth
Four renewed, glistening green
Once again peaceful, serene

Four who sprouted before my age
Plentiful, lovely foliage
Four who conquer and dominate
Forever bound to germinate

Long before and long after
Sharing cries, sharing laughter
Living wild, living free
Now and for all eternity


**A Time of Wonder**

A wonder that we can all share
Is the beauty that surrounds us.
Even the fishes in the deep, blue
Sea seem to smile at us as
They make ripples in the water.
The birds sing sweet songs that
Calm our wildest fears, but
The most important wonder of all,
Is the wonder of love in our hearts.

—Alejandra Alvarez, Grade 3, Florida.

For information about how to get involved in **Roots & Shoots**, please visit www.janegoodall.org.
Different?

He sits alone
In the airport.
The security guard spots him
And performs
A “routine” baggage search.
A shifty man
Breezes through
Security
Hugging a suitcase close to
His chest.
Is he searched?
No.
He’s not Arabic.

She’s called
To the office.
Her teachers
And the principal
Wait to see her.
Her geometry grade
Is slipping.

“We’re worried
That something’s going on
We should know about.
Is everything okay?”
The grade sheet reads
99.5 percent.
Her best friend
Is failing.
Does she attend a conference?
No.
She’s not Asian.

He enters the store:
Baggy pants
Backward cap
Pierced ears and nose.
The clerk sees him
From the corner of her eye
And pretends not to stare.
An alarm sounds
As a woman runs out

Emily

There’s always one time in your life when you stand out from the rest. Although I think it makes you unique, other people may criticize you because of your differences. Without everyone’s differences, everyone would be the same, which would be very boring. Some people just don’t seem to realize that and I sadly used to be one of those people.

One moment that will stick with me forever was one time in elementary school. Since both my parents work, I had to go to a day-care center when my school had days off. Although it could be a pain, I had many friends there. But one of the girls that also went to that daycare just annoyed me. Her name was Emily.

Emily was mentally challenged. She needed a lot of help and was always following my friends and me around. Although it didn’t bother my friends much, it sure bothered me. It made me feel like I had a stalker or something.

One day, Emily asked if she could play with my friends and me. Before anyone else could say anything, I exclaimed, “You? Play with us? Maybe if you got a new brain you could.”

Her smile immediately turned into a frown and her eyes filled with tears. I remember feeling so guilty, and that I believed that my friend deserved to tell on me. I had to apologize to Emily, which I did profusely.

To this day, that memory still haunts me. In some ways, you could say it was a bad experience, but it was also a very good learning experience. I know all the adults tell you to treat people how you would want to be treated, but you never know how right they really are until you experience something like I did. Everyone’s different in his or her own way, and no matter how corny it sounds, their differences are what make them special. Respect people and their differences, or you’ll regret it.

—Maggie Harpur, Grade 8, Pine-Richland Middle School, Pennsylvania.
Honor Awards

My Ohana is a Hawaiian Garden

Mom is like a yellow plumeria sprinkled with the morning’s rain.
Dad is a strong kukui tree promising to give us lots of kukui nuts.
Sister Kalyn is like a lokelani whispering to the slopes of Haleakala.

Cousin Darin is the hinahina spreading in the cool, light air.
Cousin Derek is the mokihana singing to the forest’s birds about his wonderful journey in the mountains.

Grandma Florence is like a lehua that makes the heavens cry when it is picked.
Grandpa George is a maile vine who swirls in the rainforests of the Big Island.

Aunty Mav is the ilima hiding in the ilima bush in the backyard.
Uncle Dave is the blue ginger whistling in the wind.

Grandma Jean is an Orchid scintillating in the living room.
Grandpa Eddie, the red ginger blending in the garden of roses.

Aunty Vi is like a hibiscus kissing the daylight with its butterfly petals.
Uncle Norman is an ‘olenia dreaming of being king of the flowers.

And last of all, but not least, I am the water that sprinkles over this beautiful Hawaiian garden.

—Erin Ichinotsubo, 8, Japanese American, Na’au, Honolulu, Hawaii.

Hawaiian words: hinahina: Spanish Moss; ilima: royal lei; kukui: candlenut; lehua: flower of Pele; lokelani: rose; mokihana: Kauaiberries; ohana: family; olena: tumeric; plumeria: frangiponi;

An Interview With a Fairy

Q: What is hope?
A: An imperfect puzzle of spells that conjure the lights inside the souls of people.

Q: Do I have a soul?
A: It depends on your own sea of hidden thoughts and pure emotions, your seething anger, lurking sadness, and secret happiness.

Q: How can I find the light?
A: Look, deep in the shadowy corners of your own spirit, you can find it because it is in you.

Q: Do you have a talent...that of granting wishes?
A: Everyone does, even a human. You have a talent in granting other people great times in life. Be yourself, though I have lots to learn about wishes beyond feelings.

Q: Tell me, Fairy, what is truly significant in life?
A: Family, to a fairy, is more important than spells. If you have no family, but you have every spell for everything, you might as well have nothing, for loneliness could kill a fairy from the inside.

Q: Finally, my fairy friend, a word of advice?
A: Keep your eyes open, not only for fairies, but for right destinations passing by and friendships to be found.

—Tae Keller, 10, Honolulu, Hawaii.

“Writing is fun for me because it is a way I can express all my feelings. I can be funny or deep and serious.” He enjoys reading and horseback riding.
Leaving Home

I slammed the taxi door as my mother called out to the driver, “Merci!” She grabbed the handle of her suitcase and swiftly rolled it across the street and up to the airport entrance. Her cousin, Elza, did the same with my suitcase and motioned with a wave of her hand for me to follow closely. The rest of my family and I walked after my mother silently because the screeching noises of the planes ruined any chance for conversation. We had little to say anyway; we had all woken up that morning knowing that we wouldn’t be together for a whole year!

We entered the airport where crowds of people were huddled together, hugging and wishing farewells. Airline workers ran to and fro trying to keep everything running smoothly. A million signs flashed everywhere, displaying departure times, delays, and gate numbers. I barely had time to pay attention to anything because my relatives were squeezing the last words they could get out of me before my mom and I left.

Once again, I was leaving behind the people and country I had been born to 14 years ago. My relatives and I spent about an hour exchanging final jokes, memories, and thoughts of wisdom to help ease the lonely feeling the airport held. I was preparing to return to my new home in America, but at the same time I was abandoning my real home, the country of Bulgaria. This happens every summer. The tears, laughs and adventures I shared with my relatives during the vacation get packed up and hop on the plane with me. This is how I can keep a little bit of my culture in my heart throughout the rest of the year. But the particular airport I was in always gave me a dreading feeling as if I was leaving my life behind.

I feel a particular connection with Bulgaria and its culture no matter where I am. I haven’t lived there since I was three but I have gone back almost every summer since then. It is my homeland and always will be no matter where my actual home is. Just like human relationships, I think the more I’m not in Bulgaria the closer it is to my heart. But I need to remember what my country really looks and sounds like. During those warm nights at my grandparents’ farm, I used to gaze at the bright constellations in the summer sky that seemed to shine differently than American stars. I admired the miles and miles of fields and farmland that Bulgaria is known for. Tall emerald cornstalks, dazzling sunflower fields, and golden brown oceans of wheat are the earliest memories of color that I have. And the sounds that go along with these images are like music for me. Not just the chirping of insects, the snoring of tired farm animals, or the barking of the village dogs, but the steady peace of silence is a beautiful sound itself. There are only the noises of nature in that small town where my grandparents live, and they are the loveliest sounds in the world to me. No cars zooming, beeping and skidding, no people yelling in the middle of the night on the streets, and no machines building huge skyscrapers!

All of these memories soared through my mind as I waited for boarding announcement. There was a sickening feeling in my stomach. Not the usual pre-flight butterflies that I had before any trip; no, I was anxious and miserable at the same time. My suitcase was depressing to look at, a dirty crimson with only two year’s use. The airline tag on its handle read “BOSTON” in huge letters which made my eyes water. A quick glance around the room provided me with familiar sights. Dozens of airline names flashed everywhere, carts were being pushed in every direction, and thousands of worried expressions filled the room. I turned to my cousin for another conversation, in Bulgarian of course. “I’m going to miss everyone so much!” I whined. “I don’t want to leave and start school in a few weeks.”

“Oh, I know you’re just dying to go back home and see your friends,” replied Rumen, my closest relative and Elza’s son. “Besides, there’s always next year!” Rumen always was the most positive one.

I laughed and responded, “You really know how to cheer people up!” Then I reached over to pat his spiky hair but he dodged my hand and smirked. My mother had gone to check our baggage in, and I saw that she had quickly returned. She’d been nervously chattering with my aunts all day, but suddenly stopped yapping and gave me a serious look.
“Alright, sweetie, boarding is about to begin. We’d better go through security,” she sighed. I nodded and looked around for my cousin, Adrianna.

“Adi! We have to go to the beach together next year!” I reminded her.

“I know, I’m so sorry. But I was just too busy. Next summer we’ll go, I swear!” she explained. I gave her long, flowing dark hair a little tug and promised to braid it if she took me to the beach next year. She happily clapped her hands and gave me a hug. Just then an announcement interrupted us.

“All passengers for Lufthansa Flight 425 should report to Gate 18 for immediate boarding,” it bel¬lowed in a mechanical voice. I gave each one of my aunts a hug, kiss and a whispered message.

I told Elza, “I left a special deck of cards for Rumen in his room, the one he always plays with. Make sure he finds it!”

“He’ll be very happy to get it. Thank you! Have a great flight!” she said with a kiss. Her mother, Rena, came up next for a hug.

“Oh, we’re going to miss you so much! You must stay longer next summer! Say hello to your father for me! Have a safe trip! I love you!” she babbled like an old granny. I gave her a tight squeeze and I could see tears in her eyes. Siika, my mother’s other cousin, handed me an envelope with photographs and told me to look at them on the plane to pass time. I thanked her warmly and we hugged. Rumen was the last to receive a parting hug from me. We giggled for the last time for a whole year, and I gave him a great big bear hug.

My mother finished her goodbyes and grinned. That smile lifted my spirits and comforted me. I was certain that I would have an even better summer next year...I took my mother’s hand, and together we spoke a few more words in my native tongue to our loved ones. With a heavy heart, I turned back to my friends and family. As we walked up to the gate, we were walking up to our present American life. My culture is buried among my daily routine. A song, a flag, a picture, anything Bulgarian can trigger a feeling inside of me, a feeling of truth and belonging.

—Eva Kirilova, 15, Bulgarian American, Mass.

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**Sticks and Stones**

That boy at school with light brown hair
Sits in the corner with a vacant stare.
We don’t know what his problem is,
what hurt his self-esteem.
And some don’t even really care,
I write this poem for him.

The world is mean, the world is cruel.
We crash, we burn, then start brand new
To build up just so we can fall.
Why can’t we just not judge at all?

It’s said, “Sticks and stones can break my bones,
but words will never hurt me.”
I laugh and say, “Bones will heal, but words hurt without mercy.”
I mean, haven’t you heard what people say
In the halls at school every day—

“That one’s too hyper.” “That one’s too shy.”
“If he isn’t stoned, then he’s probably high.”
“She’s just a prep,” and “He’s just a geek.”
“We’re better than they’re.” You see what I mean?

That girl at the dance, all by herself.
Nobody’s asked her yet and no one ever will.
To them she’s a shadow, to them she’s a blur.
That’s why I am writing this poem for her.

There’s always a loner, a bully, a hippie,
A skater, a jock, a geek and a preppie.
A wish I could, wannabe, maybe, if only,
A genius, a bad boy, a fruitcake, a homely,
A teacher’s pet, a gangster, a fool,
A rapper, a cowboy, a ski bum and you.

Words can hurt, treat you like dirt
And leave a wound that’s hard to mend.
Sticks and stones can break my bones;
The pain from words may never end.

—I Jessica A. Kerr, 14, Idaho.

“I keep a pencil and note pad at my bed side because many of my poems start jingling around in my head just before I go to sleep and just as I’m waking up.

Art: Yulya Sapelnikova, 12, Bologoe, Russia.
How Are Things on Your End? Tips for Parents of Children with Special Needs

Parenting any child can be difficult. Additional challenges arise when the child has a disability. I was born with a disability. As my parents raised me, I observed what worked and what didn’t. I think you’ll find these points helpful in raising your own child with special needs:

1. Educate yourself

Make every effort to research your child’s condition. Read about it, talk with medical professionals, and try to locate other parents of children with the problem. Knowing what lies ahead will help you make appropriate choices for your child. When my parents decided on treatment for my spina-bifida, a birth defect which can result in orthopedic, neurological, and bowel and bladder control problems, my mother read up on it and asked questions. Doctors are trained professionals, but you’re the boss. If something doesn’t sound right, speak up. Most doctors are willing to discuss your concerns. Get organized, voice those concerns and ask questions.

2. Think with your head, not your heart

Yes, it’s good to have a heart. But it’s important to balance that with common sense and knowledge. Once you have gathered information on your child’s condition, consider the problems s/he will face. Is there a cure? Are you prepared to facilitate your child’s independence? What medical and educational services are available? These questions need to be addressed. Although my parents didn’t emphasize the importance of independence, I did go to summer camp and I was home-schooled when necessary. But, there weren’t many programs available in our rural area for children with physical limitations or for their parents. Advances in telecommunications make finding services easier today. Keeping various options open will benefit your child greatly, while giving yourself peace of mind and the strength to go on.

3. Resist the temptation to baby your child

To promote self-confidence and independence in your child, it is vital that you resist being overly protective. My mother still tries to baby me, and I just turned forty! She has said she felt responsible for my birth defect. She reacted by over compensating; smothering me. This can stunt growth in many ways. I was a pro at health maintenance, but I failed on the emotional, psychological and social levels. Regardless of disability, there are things your child can do. Give her/him chores based on her/his capabilities. Let them make mistakes. Encourage them to be active. The more s/he can do on her/his own, the better.

4. Get your child involved

Whether it’s at church, at school, or in the community, it’s important to encourage your child with special needs as you would any other child, to get out there and do something as early in life as possible. Find out her/his interests and strengths and nurture them. Concentrating on the negative aspects of the disability can increase the tendency toward dependence, self-consciousness, and self-pity, while focusing on the positive is apt to increase self-esteem, improve social skills, and work wonders on attitude. During high school studies, when I joined clubs and did volunteer work, I made more friends. What a difference it made on my outlook!

5. Seek out therapy

It’s imperative for parents of children with disabilities to get therapy. Guilt, depression and anxiety can occur as a result of giving birth to a baby with problems. Yes, friends and loved ones can help, but an impartial professional might be able to give you a different perspective on things. You can’t make the problem go away, but you can change your attitude toward it. And, you can organize your life around it. A therapist can show you how. It might also be beneficial to locate a therapist for your child, and the rest of your family, early on. Counseling can provide each person with the opportunity to discuss issues regarding the matter in a neutral setting. When I was born, no one suggested therapy. It wasn’t until I was fifteen that my mother convinced me to enter therapy. The years of dealing with spina bifida had taken their toll. I became angry and depressed. I wanted to die. Going to therapy saved my life.

6. Take care of yourself

When a child with special needs joins the family, everything tends to revolve around them. At times, that’s necessary. But, it’s important to take care of yourself in order to meet the needs of your family. Enlist the help of relatives, friends, day care, and others to allow yourself some “me time,” to recharge your batteries. Once your child is stabilized, try to pursue interests you had prior to her birth. Getting away and relaxing may seem impossible, but it can happen, and needs to so that you can maintain your physical, mental and emotional health. Good luck!

—Amy Colgan-Niemeyer, New York.
Multicultural Celebration at Saint Joseph Catholic School, Marietta, Georgia

1. Laura Beibel, gr. 8
2. Alexandra Havlik, gr. 8
3. Sarah Seminaro, gr. K
4. Sean Sandlin, gr. 5

See the Youth Honor Awards, page 27.

Art by Julia, 12, Youth Award Winner from Russia.

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