

# BEST BETTER



Georgia 4-H's Literary Magazine - Issue #1 - Fall 2018



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA  
EXTENSION



**GEORGIA**  
4-H

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"Window at Rock Eagle", by Nicholas McKinley, Paulding County

Though we appreciate all submissions to Best Better, unfortunately we are not able to publish all of them. If you submitted to this issue and your work was not published, please feel free to resubmit it for the following issue. Reasons a piece may not be published include length, quality of upload, inappropriate file type or many other reasons. Please be sure to submit writing in a format that may be copy and pasted, not as a jpeg or scan. If you are submitting a photo of your art, please take the photo on a neutral background, and omitting as much of your hands as possible.

This issue's cover photo is "Blooms of Spring" by Chattooga County's Lydia Pence.

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## Thanks and Acknowledgements

Best Better is made possible by the work and support of many people. Thanks to Arch Smith, Sue Chapman, Jason Estep, Courtney Brown, Jeffrey Burke, Natalie Bock, Tim Collings, Zac Evans, Mary Lynn Huie, and Caroline Bedingfield for their assistance and support in making Best Better a reality. Additional thanks to all Extension staff that promoted, edited and submitted work for Best Better and to all 4-H'ers that read or submit work to Best Better.



"Bugging" by Gerrell Glenn, Augusta Richmond County





"Ecclesiastes" 3:4 Dancing by Anna Johnson, Crawford County

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# Welcome to Best Better

As I sit here, trying to find something to say for my very first letter from the editor for the very first issue of *Best Better Magazine*, I find myself coming up blank. This magazine existed only in my brain for about a year, before I pitched it as a place for 4-H'ers across the state to share their art and writing and have it genuinely valued by their friends and peers. Being in a position to write any sort of introduction letter, at all, feels like a dream.

When I was in kindergarten, we wrote and illustrated picture books, that were given to us bound in colorful cardboard covers a week later. I remember that moment, seeing my writing and my drawings in a real book, and thinking it was the coolest, most important thing that would ever happen to me (spoiler alert: it wasn't.) That's the kind of moment I want to chase with *Best Better*, and if you've submitted something to this issue and are feeling extremely proud of having it published, I promise you I know exactly how that moment feels. For its contributors, I want *Best Better* to be a validation, proof that their writing and art is valuable to them and others. If you haven't contributed to this issue, I hope this magazine inspires you to try submitting something of your own. We've all got something to say and experiences to share. I hope going forward, that *Best Better* can be a venue for those things.

Michael Rabalais

Editor



# ASK A WRITER



Every issue, we want to talk to writers and hear about their process, and why they write. They could be amateurs, professionals, or somewhere in between. This issue, we're talking to Atlanta area musician, rapper, and Project Achievement judge, Zac Evans, about how he writes his music.

This song was written for the hip-hop/jazz band that I lead called Monkier in the Spring of 2016. The process of writing the song went through a couple of different phases, but the initial idea was to have this as the first track on the album and grab your attention from the jump. See, we had submitted to play at a festival in Athens, GA (Athfest) the previous year, but didn't get on the line-up. Their review process required to submit a couple of songs with your application. The previous year I submitted a song that takes a second to really ramp up and for lyrics to even enter. This song has a brief piano lead-in, then comes immediately with the verse. I liked the idea of the immediacy. Hence the name of the song, "Cold Open."

The title didn't do great for the SEO (search engine optimization) of the song considering that every episode of Saturday Night Live starts with a sketch also titled

"Cold Open." Oh well. Fame will have to wait.

The rest of the song dealt with a number of other issues that a lot of us go through: break-up, death in the family, grad school, and self doubt. Once you view the lyrics with these themes in mind, the meaning should click into place.



Monkier's sophomore album, "highs/low" is available now wherever you stream or purchase music.

# COLD OPEN

COLD OPEN, I'm hoping to hit you in your soul  
That moment, the minute you know you're on your  
own  
Be broken, surrender your sense of self-control  
Still holding, but maybe it's time to let you go

Or maybe it's time to let you know  
That pretty soon the Earth is gonna overflow  
Vibration, it sinks down deeper than the soil  
And I'll take it, the chance to give you everything

That I am, revealing what is left  
I'll give you all I've got. I'll give you my last breath  
Show you the meaning of living that's revealed in  
death  
But I've got no answers. It's only what I've heard

No, it's never enough  
Some people run around, others look above  
I think the question stands between fear and love  
If the latter resonates then reach and raise your  
hands up

COLD OPEN, glad I got your attention  
See, my ego is in need of a mention  
And I've been missing for a minute  
Tell me how did you spend it?  
Cause I tend to waste a lot of time

You're on my mind  
And I don't know what to do about it  
And I don't know what to do without you  
You're withholding the things that used to seem so  
plain  
And I'm scared by the idea of perpetual change

But instead of doing nothing  
Gonna linger while I'm young  
I've got my finger on the button  
I'm a singer on a Sunday

I'm a college grad and a half  
Rapped to watch you laugh  
Lied to state a fact, called to take it back

But it's never enough  
Be the chair behind you when your feet are giving  
up  
I know that time's are tough. I know that life is loud  
But I'll take it how I get it as long as you will allow,  
yeah

COLD OPEN, I need you to listen further  
Cause even beginnings all have an end  
Even the negative sky shines again  
Even enemies fall, the ground embraces them  
Replacing the men with energy

Dark matter's visibility, freeing the demon in me  
Seeing the need in your stare  
So take my eyes and turn them into glasses  
So when our gazes meet maybe you can see past

I've got one more month of living in this house  
You said one more year, now you're trying to get  
out  
Give me one reason not to give this up  
You said one last time, and despite that I'll always  
be

Never enough  
Some people lack faith, I don't got trust  
The only thing that I wanted was to offer my help  
Close the distance with you  
And to try to see something beyond myself

----

(sampled voice)

"The beginning of a journey. When you begin the  
process of CLOSURE, and accept the change that  
follows... the end is always the same."





"Chinese Horse" by Juliette McKinley, Paulding County

# HORSES IN ANCIENT HISTORY

**Juliette McKinley**  
**Paulding County**

It has been said that the dog may be a man's best friend, but the horse wrote history. Did you know that some of the ancient world's most influential men had horses as their best friends, not dogs? I am going to share with you a few stories about my favorite horses in Ancient History. Let's travel back to Ancient Greece, 800 – 600 BC, to the time of Greek gods where horses played a prominent role in Greek Mythology.

When you think of the Greek Gods, the most famous horse is Pegasus. Pegasus was a white winged horse and was the son of Poseidon and Medusa. Poseidon was the god of the sea, earthquakes and horses, and Medusa was a Gorgon monster with snakes for hair. Since Pegasus could not live underwater, he couldn't live with his father and he didn't want to live with his mother because he was afraid of snakes.

Without a family, Pegasus roamed the earth looking for a home. He wanted more than anything to be part of a herd, but the other horses were afraid of him. Even though he felt lonely, he would keep himself busy by rescuing

Greek soldiers from the battlefield. He would swoop down and carry away those too injured to fight. He would take them to safety then fly back to help others until the battle was won.

The god Zeus had seen Pegasus's mighty deeds and the two soon became friends. Zeus gave his friend a forever home in Olympus. Pegasus would often carry Zeus across the heavens as he ruled over both men and gods. Zeus loved Pegasus so much that in honor of his deeds, he made him a constellation so that he would be remembered throughout history. A fun fact is that most people believe that Pegasus belonged to Zeus' son Hercules due to the Disney movie, "Hercules", but there is no account in mythology of Pegasus being owned by Hercules. The movie boosted his popularity among children but it is his heroic deeds written in the stars has made him a favorite among people both young and old.

Moving forward to Macedonia, 344 BC, we find the horse Bucephalus whose name meant Ox Head. Bucephalus was a large jet-black stallion with a wall eye. He was an unruly horse, brought to the palace of King Phillip the Second



of Macedonia by a horse dealer who was asking the hefty sum of 13 talons. Seeing that no one could get near, much less ride this horse, King Phillip was not interested in Bucephalus.

But his son, Alexander, who was only 12 years old, saw this as an opportunity to prove his strength to his father, who viewed Alexander as a weak child. Alexander stood up, said he could tame the horse and, if he failed, he would pay for the horse himself. Alexander had a great love and understanding of horses. He noticed that Bucephalus seemed scared of his own shadow. So, he approached the horse and turned him away from the sun. Unable to see his shadow, the horse became calm. Alexander whispered to Bucephalus that his shadow was just the trick of Apollo and asked him if they could ride together. He quickly mounted and tamed the unruly horse in front of his father and the crowd.

Mounted on Bucephalus, this 12-year-old boy grew to become Alexander the Great. He could ask anything, and the horse would do it. Bucephalus became a fierce war horse who feared nothing. His great size allowed him to tower over the enemy. His long and beautiful strides would move him across the field with ease. He was unfazed by noise and seemed almost immune to injury. On numerous occasions he was pierced by arrows that would have taken down a lesser horse yet Bucephalus plowed on. He helped Alexander and his armies to one victory after another.

First conquering Persia, then the rest of the Middle East, Asia, and India. They rode together for almost 20 years until tragedy struck at Bucephalus's final battle at Hydaspes. Alexander's army

defeated King Porus of the Paurava, but Bucephalus' injuries were too great for him to overcome

It is said that Alexander never recovered from the loss of his great friend. Without Bucephalus, Alexander no longer cared about conquest or the Great Empire they had secured. Alexander built Bucephalus a tomb with his own hands and founded the city of Bucephala around it in honor of his horse.

Let's fast-forward to the Roman Empire to the third emperor Caligula's short reign from 37-41 AD. Incitatus, also known as "Caligula's Horse", is one of the most famous horses in history known more for his pampered treatment by the emperor than his abilities as a racehorse. Incitatus was a chariot racing stallion imported from Spain and was the favorite horse of the Emperor Caligula. As a chariot horse, it is assumed that Incitatus would have been around 14.2 hands, a pony by today's standards. He had to be strong enough to pull a chariot and driver while nimble enough to maneuver between the other chariots and any obstacles that could appear on the course. The name Incitatus meaning "swift" or "at full gallop" in Latin suggest that he was all this and more. History states that Incitatus never lost a race. It is often thought that Caligula was insane. He claimed that Incitatus was a combination of all the gods and that he was to be worshiped. Caligula appointed Incitatus to the Roman Senate. Incitatus had a stable of marble, with an ivory manger, purple blankets, and a collar of precious stones. He was attended by servants and was fed oats mixed with gold flake. Caligula had a house and garden built for his horse. He would even invite dignitaries to dine with Incitatus. Legend has it that Caligula would sleep



Mare's Eye by Juliette McKinley, Paulding County



'Horse Head' by Nicholas McKinley, Paulding County



with Incitatus nights before a race to ensure that the horse had a restful night's sleep and would kill anyone that woke his horse.

However, there are those that do not believe that Caligula was insane, but rather was making a statement about the uselessness of the Roman Senate, implying that his horse could do better job.

Throughout history the phrase Caligula's Horse often refers to an abuse of power.

Today, history has repeated itself. When I was eight years old, I received a miniature mule named Hershey. He is half donkey and half Shetland pony with a dark chocolate colored coat. Hershey may not be a mythical creature, but he was a little girl's dream. I felt like we were flying every time I rode him. Hershey became my best friend. His large ears let him hear all my thoughts and secrets. One Halloween we made long flowing wings of real feathers that we draped over his back and that dragged the ground and I dressed as a goddess. With Hershey as Pegasus, we were victorious in two costume contests.

When I got Hershey, he was green. Like Alexander, I had to figure out how to train him. I used natural horsemanship techniques, which builds a bond with your horse to train him. Hershey and I may not have battled armies, but we competed in many horse shows and trail challenges. We conquered both the show ring and challenge arena. Sometimes we would have bad days and Hershey, being a mule, would become stubborn and not want to do anything. I wouldn't give up on him. I would whisper into

his long beautiful ears, "We can do it." Hershey would rise to the occasion, and we would win the class.

Hershey is retired now due to a tumor that took over part of his face, but don't feel sorry for him because he is living the good life, like a modern day Incitatus. He has his stall mucked and fresh shavings placed every day. We put his medicine in little pecan pies, which he believes are for his enjoyment. He has his own purple blanket to keep him warm in the winter, even though he has a thick coat, and he is given a yummy mash for breakfast and dinner with a few extras throughout the day.

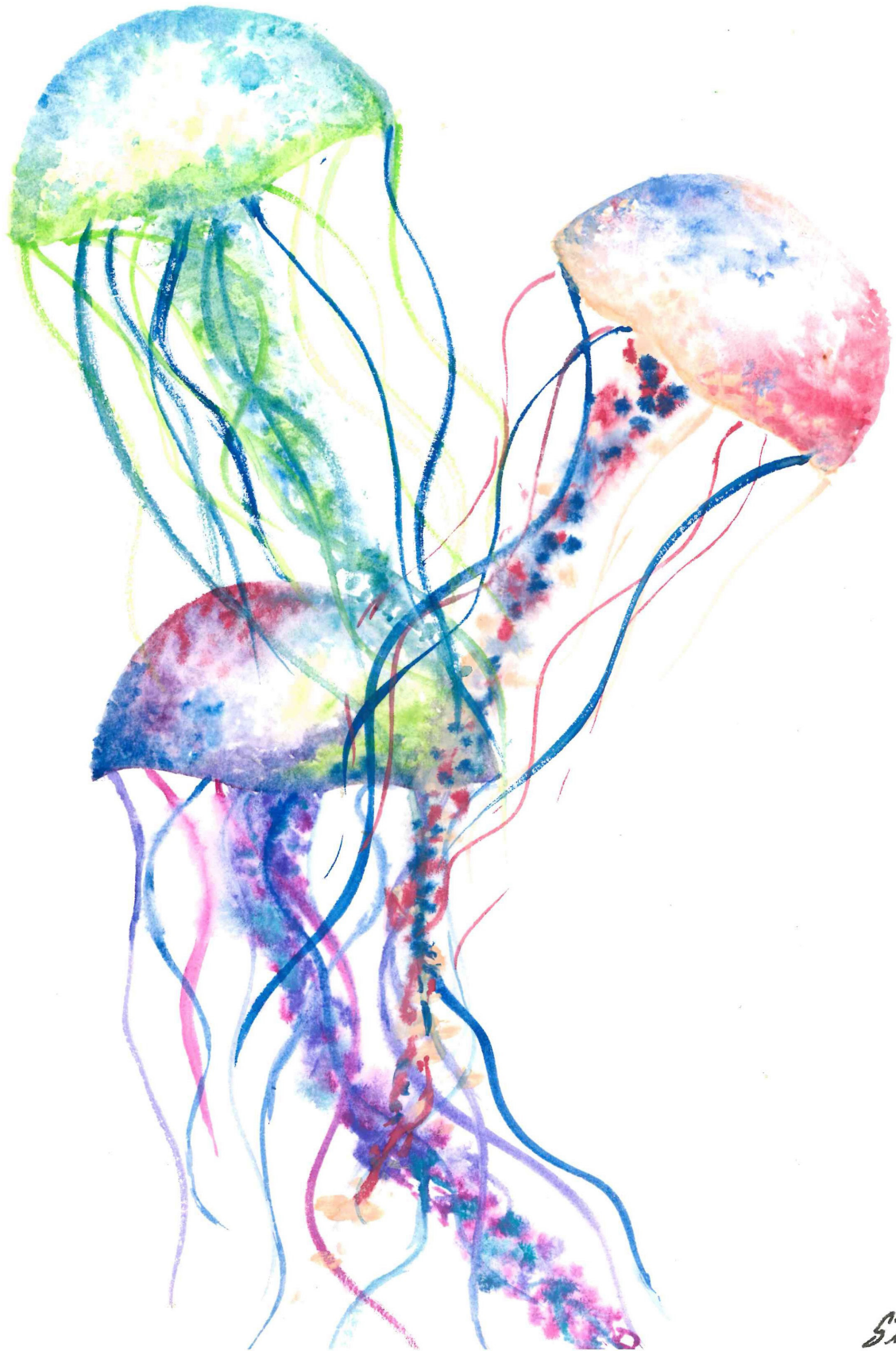
Like the partnerships between Pegasus and Zeus, Bucephalus and Alexander, and Caligula and Incitatus, the bond between Hershey and I continues to grow. Today, I have shared with you some amazing stories about horses throughout ancient history. I have enjoyed studying history because I am able to relate it to my life. I hear these stories and understand exactly how they felt by relating their relationships with their horses to mine with Hershey.

So, I leave you today with ...

Sum servus tuus canis, Ut esse hominis Et equi scripsit historiam amicus.

A dog may be man's best friend, but the horse wrote history. Unknown Author.

I believe all equines can write history, even a little mule named Hershey who left hoof prints on my heart.



"Prismatic Jellyfish" by Shelby Lane, Spalding County

SL





"Expressions" by Gerrell Glenn, Augusta Richmond County



"Girl in the Plum Dress" by Shelby Lane, Spalding County

# AFTER I'M GONE

by Tyler Sims, Augusta Richmond County

After I'm Gone  
 Once I depart  
 the house won't be the same.  
 So quiet it has become now that I am  
 gone.  
 The dogs sit in the window  
 waiting for me to return.  
 The full house  
 once filled with laughter and the clutter of  
 my things  
 is now vacant and lonely.

My parents sit alone reminiscing of the  
 days  
 when the house full of noise and  
 the love of a small boy  
 who is now grown up  
 into a man and pursuing his dreams.  
 They sit alone so proud of the man that  
 I have become and waiting on the day  
 that I come for a visit.

# GRATITUDE

by Sam Tidd  
Cherokee County

Gratitude is least given when accustomed to,  
All the wild places we've adjusted through,  
But among this scenery we must be called to ponder,  
The parks and the trails that we have wandered

I've watched ten thousand drops take flight from falling water,  
Colored-pencil shaving leaves dance to the silent tune of nature's breaking breath,  
My attention is not so leashed, out here,  
And I will not let this be taken

The generations that have lived this tremendous setting,  
to thrive and visit  
to receive and receive  
to discover not timid  
And now it may leave,  
Don't let it leave.

But what can regular people do?  
Because, of this danger we all knew,  
Dollars and cents and sense are needed,  
But more so: time and hands, and plants seeded,  
To clean up the ocean and the river it's wife,  
Because saving these places will touch

more than one life,

To clean up a river is to clean up ten towns,  
To clean up a world is the greatest of crowns,  
By sundown each day the amount of decay  
Equals seventy elephants in the pounds  
that they weigh.

I'm not the Lorax, I don't speak for the trees  
But I love the rivers, the grass, and the breeze  
And these are the times that call upon you,  
Inside and outside the red, white, and blue.





"Intense Sea Turtle" by Shelby Lane, Spalding County

# OCEAN

by Jessica Hogg, Effingham County

I stand on the border of water and land  
Of wet and of dry  
Of fish and of man  
Of seaweed and grass  
Of boat and of car  
Of swimming and walking  
Of near and of far  
Ones who cross this border of type there are few  
Seagull and crab and albatross, too  
Walrus and polar bear, turtle and seal  
To these crossers of boundaries both do appeal  
The earth and ocean are their homes

# HOPE

by Anna Johnson  
Crawford County

"What is this? It's beautiful." The Scholar Gosah inquired.

Jezamine beautified herself with a smile, as was her way. She delicately paced over to him in a princess-ly fashion.

"That, my dear Gosah, is a flower much more powerful and unique than your science. Notice how it enchants you with its beauty. It grows only in this place- the land of Beualia." Jezamine gracefully plucked up the flowers twin, its partner in growth, and twirled it between her fingers with tenderness unseen by any other.

"What makes it unique?" He adjusted his seeing glasses and licked his lips to rid it of the dryness from the cold.

"Unique? Why, it has magic. That's what compelled you to pick it, dearest. It deemed you worthy of its magic. It can grant a wish."

"What kind of wish, princess Jezamine?"

"Only that of abstract. Nothing physical, and nothing to affect the physical directly. Very strict, it is. The flower will only grant a wish of the wisher with a pure heart," she explained.

"That is what makes it unique. What makes it powerful?"

"This flower is called Beualia, from our land. You are a fine Scholar, are you not? What does this word translate to?" She grinned.

"Beualia? It sounds like it's an ancient name. Perhaps from Zixen decent?"

Jezamine frowned.

"Surely you know better, Gosah? Where is this name from?"

"Oh, I do know. It's Grandeur, is it not?" He continued when Jezamine nodded. "It translates to...Hope. What a curious name. What does that mean?" He asked.

"It means that the wishes of this flower are so pure and will only grant wishes of hope. To receive one of these flowers, one must have hope. To use it? A pure heart filled with hope. The wish? It is a wish that is abstract, affecting nothing physical, not directly. It grants the wish of hope. This is what makes it powerful."

"I see, princess." He nods.

"Do you have hope, Wisher Gosah? Hope from my Scholar?" Jezamine placed a soft hand on his cheek.

"I believe I do, my princess." He smiled.

"Then give the flower your hope, and hope for a wish."

The Scholar Gosah blew into the flower, and it glowed for just a moment. The petals melted into the wind one by one, and he smiled.

"What did you wish for?" She asked him.

"For my child goodwill- a life filled with this very hope."





"Mustang" by Juliette McKinley, Paulding County

## MAKING THE MOST OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

BY WYATT POWERS, GLYNN COUNTY

4-H is all about making the best better, right? Right. And what's a great way to improve your life as well as that of others? By volunteering! Here are some ideas to get yourself started.

Over the years, I have found a lot of different ways to contribute through community service. Here are just a few of the places you can volunteer at: your local community garden, nearby state parks, nearby national parks, your local beach or lake and at your 4-H office. There, you can help younger kids with their speeches, help others with their portfolios and just ask the staff what you can do to assist at upcoming events.

Here are some suggestions for being prepared before taking on an outdoor project. When you are volunteering at your local garden (if

you have one), make sure that you have some work gloves, work clothes (very important) and a good hat so the sun doesn't get in your eyes. If you volunteer at local state parks, be prepared to do some heavy lifting of firewood if there is a campground and bring a face mask if you will be mowing a lawn. It will depend on what park you decide to volunteer at. For cleaning up your local beach or lake, all you really need are some rubber gloves and plastic bags to pick up trash. One tip; if you are cleaning up a beach on the Georgia Coast and you see something blue that looks like a jellyfish, do not touch it. That is a Portuguese Man o' War, which is very poisonous and can still sting you, even if it is dead!

Some volunteer positions are indoors. If you decide to help out younger members



"Feeling Peckish" by Carson Griffeth, Clarke County

with their District Project Achievement presentations, I suggest that you brush up on how to make one by reading, watching TED talks or YouTube videos on how to make a good speech, because this doesn't come easy to everyone. If you are good at putting speeches together, you will have a great time helping out. Not only will your agent(s) be grateful for your help, the younger 4-H'ers will be, too. The other part of working with presentations is that you can also assist with portfolios. Just sitting there and helping people go over and list what they have done during the year is very helpful. And for the last, yet equally important thing, be sure to ask your 4-H agent(s), "How can I help you, Mr./Ms./Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_?" This is

a nice thing you can do because it lets your 4-H agent(s) know that you are there to help and that you appreciate them.

Another benefit of volunteering is that it fills up space on your portfolio and makes for great photos. My favorite way to volunteer so far is definitely helping out younger kids with their District Project Achievement because I really like learning about the diverse topics that they choose. It's fun to see what they come up with.

So the next time you hear the word "volunteering," don't run screaming. Trust me, you can make the best better, and you'll be happy you did.



# THANK YOU AND GOODBYE

by Hinano Tomlinson  
Sumter County

Thank You and Goodbye  
 It hurts to know that you're gone  
 Gone so far  
 I miss your smile and your laugh  
 Your voice, being in your hands  
 Was it all meant to be this way?  
 To live, to live without you everyday  
 Tomorrow will start without you  
 Hurts, but I know it's true  
 I can't help but remember you with all of  
 these tears  
 Even after all of these years  
 Will our memories still carry on?  
 Pains me to know your light is gone  
 Please tell me I'm not alone  
 Don't wanna see your name engraved in  
 stone  
 Give me a sign, are you here with me?  
 It's only you I want to see  
 Will our paths ever cross again?  
 Cannot seem to comprehend  
 Wish we weren't so far apart  
 Just know you're still in my heart  
 It's not your fault, I'll be okay  
 Our paths will cross again someday  
 I'll just have to believe  
 It was your time to leave  
 So I thank you for being here  
 For all of these countless years  
 I hope you're okay up there  
 Finding your place somewhere  
 Promise you'll stay by my side  
 To be there, to be my guide  
 I know that you really tried  
 But I guess now, it's goodbye...  
 - Hinano Tomlinson



Top:

"Susan the Fat Pastel Goth Bird" by Anna Trussell, Schley County

"Window at Rock Eagle" by Nicholas McKinley, Paulding County

"Planting on Earth Day" by Jamiah Tolbert, Bibb County

Middle:

"Nature's Beauty" by Mia Carver, Bacon County

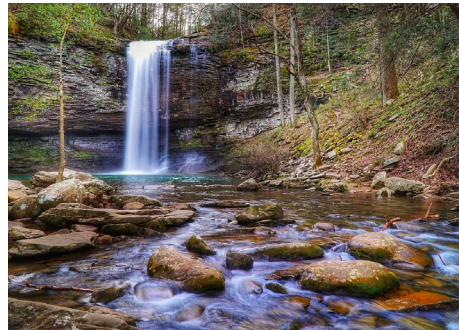
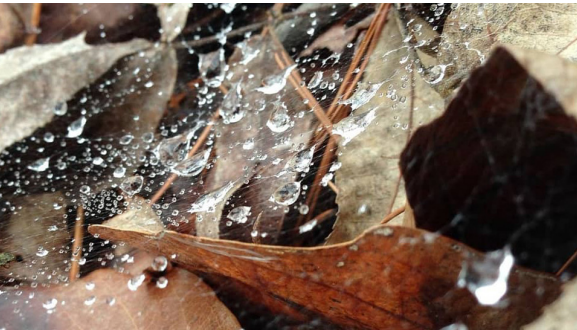
"Suspended Droplets" by Lydia Pence, Chattooga County

"Cascading Water" by Sam Tidd, Cherokee County

Bottom:

"Darkness and Light" by Nicholas McKinley, Paulding County

"Cape Cod Whale" by Nicholas McKinley, Paulding County







"Purple Iris (watercolor)" by Haley Tidd, Cherokee County



# MY PERSPECTIVE ON INCREASING GRADUATION RATES THROUGH LITERACY WEEK

by **Katelyn Watson**  
**Turner County**

I live in a rural county with less than 9,000 people. With a poverty rate of 25.4% and a graduation rate of 90%, literacy is a community issue. 1 in 4 children in America grow up without learning how to read. Additionally, there are immigrants migrating into the area due to the demands of heavy hand labor for vegetable production who don't speak English as a first language. Emergent literacy skills are critical skills that children need to develop before they can learn to read. In order to promote literacy, I coordinated a week-long reading program at Lil' Blessings Learning Center for children and adults.

My leadership project reached children aged from infant to twelve years old, as well as adults of all ages. Each day of the week promoted a different Dr. Seuss book and theme of characters. To visually enhance the experience, I hand-painted banners and decorations for each classroom as well as planned out each activity to match the days' themes.

The celebration kicked off on the afternoon of Friday, March 2nd (Dr. Seuss's birthday) with cupcakes and punch provided by a local sponsor I solicited. A local leader volunteered time to be a costumed "Cat in the Hat" and made a surprise

appearance to read the book titled "Happy Birthday Dr. Seuss" to each classroom.

The following Monday, I promoted one of Dr. Seuss' more popular books "The Cat in the Hat." Each child was encouraged to wear red and white stripes to represent the Cat's hat. We read "The Cat in the Hat" and watched the movie to go with it. The handprint activity with red and blue paint highlighted the two characters Thing One and Thing Two. For toddlers, knowing which color goes on top for the hair compared to the bottom color red for the shirt allowed them to reflect of their image compared to funny characters.

On Tuesday, the theme was One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish. Children were encouraged to wear red or blue. We read the book One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish and did a hand print fish activity that resembled the book cover. Recognizing colors and correctly identifying the differences are important skills for preschoolers. This book and activity used repetition of the word "fish" for the simplest form of word identification.

Wednesday's theme, "Green Eggs and Ham," encouraged children to wear green. The breakfast consisted of green eggs and

ham, of course! After all, why not add in a little more taste sensory experience to promote the week. We read the book Green Eggs and Ham and for the activity, children painted and constructed green eggs and ate some colorful green pudding for a snack. This encouraged them to try something different they may not normally have.

Thursday's book, "Horton Hears a Who," gave children an opportunity to make an elephant out of their handprint accented with a pink clover. Finishing off the week on Friday was "The Lorax." After story time, the eager learners created a Lorax out of oranges.

Over a five-consecutive-day period, young children were exposed to an imaginary world of fun. Approximately 75 children were excited to listen to an adult read a book aloud to them. They saw new words and learned new vocabulary to improve their literacy skills. Under my leadership, the teachers and staff facilitated the activities and read during the story time.

By having Dr. Seuss Week, literacy and social cognitive skills were promoted. It is most important to build these skills at a young age, because the children are most impressionable during this time. Further, their brains are developing the fastest when they are younger, which means their social cognitive skills are most easy to shape. In addition, the reinforcement of fun activities has helped the children to associate reading with those fun activities so they see reading as a positive. Activities are important for fine motor skill development. Painting is also an expression of early writing efforts. These students increased their verbal and nonverbal skills and expressed themselves through paint, hand art and crafts.

Moreover, learning these basic literacy skills helps to build the foundation they

will need for a successful life. They can put these skills to good use in everyday life to benefit society. Also, the children build on their vocabulary, which will greatly improve their social skills. Overall, reading and literacy is the foundation for all other subjects. Building these skills will help these children be more academically successful, more efficient communicators, and give them an advantage in the world.

As I reflect over my experience with this project and evaluate what happened, I see children excited about Dr. Seuss. They ask when they will do that again? For a toddler, I am creating excitement and positive energy that will carry over into Kindergarten and beyond. Planting a seed to learn will grow in them until it blooms with a diploma. The emotional connections they experienced with literacy will more than likely carry over into another generation. I hope these eager learners can remember this week, and when they have children, I know they will be more apt to help foster a positive connection to reading in their children.



"Majestic" by Jerrold Holt, Greene County



# I BUILT A FRIEND

by Daniel Merero

Long County

I built a friend  
 With two pieces of paper and a pen  
 I knew that relationship will never end  
 But then it all took a turn  
 At the age of seven  
 Sitting alone at the table  
 People saying I smell like a stable  
 So I just ate my chicken and left them alone  
 Then what I do  
 I went home  
 He asked if I had learned anything new  
 I said no  
 Well in that case you might as well go  
 So I went up stairs  
 Yes I always go up there  
 Always when life isn't fair  
 When no one else seems to care  
 I didn't have much but two pieces of paper  
 and a pen  
 And I knew them things will never end  
 so I decided to build a friend  
 With those two pieces of paper and a pen  
 And a pen  
 And we had so much fun together  
 I knew we'll be friends for ever  
 For ever  
 I took it to school  
 Everyday it came with me  
 Everyday it was the key  
 Everynight it lay by my side  
 By my side  
 We laugh and cried  
 Always with it by my side  
 Everyday  
 Every ride

It was always by my side  
 By my side  
 Now I'm eleven  
 With two pieces of paper and a pen  
 Thinking that relationship will never end  
 Never end  
 It comes with me  
 But I leave it in Tennessee  
 In my dad's garage  
 Do you see  
 Every three years it lives with me  
 Every three  
 I got a couple friends now  
 And I got a new pet cow  
 Got a little brother called ben  
 Little ben  
 Now im fifteen  
 With two pieces of paper and a pen  
 I thought that relationship will never end  
 But that was then  
 Now I got a call  
 And no one else could hear it  
 It said my friend was gone  
 It said I forgot about it for too long  
 Then I remember  
 My two pieces of paper and a pen  
 The relationship I thought would never end  
 Never end  
 Yes we had so much fun together  
 I thought we'd be friends forever  
 But it ends  
 With two pieces of paper and a pen



"Mother Nature" by Gerrell Glenn, Augusta Richmond County



# IF THE SHOE FITS THEN WEAR IT!

by **Lydia Connell**  
**Tift County**

"It is not natural nor humane to nail metal stakes viciously into the bottom of horses' hooves." Have you ever heard someone scream out that phrase? Other enthusiasts might approach a more intellectual argument and lean towards facts to support their opinion. Is the average 1200 pound horse able to handle inflexible terrain impacting their bare soles? I imagine that all of the educated arguments regarding shodding originate from individuals with various talents and knowledge, but there is one thing that we must all agree upon concerning this matter. Every equine is built differently and conformation plays a huge role. Our equine world consists of many different breeds, which follow the traditional genetics and hereditary route. All horses do not perform the same jobs and disciplines--some have strenuous activities and others were born with a silver spoon in their mouth. Lastly, the most important topic discussing shoes on hooves is nutrition and maintenance. Which is correct here? Shoes on or shoes off? Fingers often get pointed at the owners who shod their horses as being inhumane and ruining hooves. Understanding the different sides of the fence is the ultimate goal from all.

Horses are like humans. We have good and bad genetics and we all carry our weight a little differently. Horses inherit

their qualities and characteristics from the previous generations. One of those characteristics is the condition of the hoof. As precise as a farrier might be, there are some hooves you cannot trim and train to accept the barefoot challenge. Breeders have succeeded in dealing with various hoof issues, however, having a horse with problematic soles will never be totally eradicated. When a horse is unable to stand with all its weight perfectly balanced, the horse's weight is disproportioned and that is a result of unsound hooves. In this circumstance, applying shoes is best for the horse. Even with the best supplements, diets and maintenance, this predicament cannot be corrected.

Horses literally live on different sides of the tracks. Performance horses such as track racers, barrel racers, pole racers, roping, endurance horses, and even search and rescue horses vary as the type of environment their hooves come in contact with. Jobs and disciplines play a tremendous role in whether or not assistance to the hoof is needed. In racing events, shoes are a must for traction and safety. Shoes are able to alleviate the pressures and sensitivities from the hard impacts, slides and stops. Properly applied shoes can maximize their performance and help to reduce lameness. On the other hand, pleasure



and show horses may or may not need the additional advantage a shoe provides the hoof. Only a certified farrier can determine the deficiency a hoof potentially has, and if engaged correctly, there is no way the act of shoeing a horse is inhumane. Having a horse with a need for the dependency of shoes and not adhering to that demand is an example of inhumane treatment. We all run across that "superman" horse with no shoes, perfect conformation, and is an easy keeper. You can thank good genetics for that.

The last reason to mention why shoes can be beneficial and necessary would be because of nutritional and maintenance inadequacy. The majority of horses rarely have just one owner for their life time. Equine that lack correct nutrition and maintenance at a young age can have negative results on their hooves throughout their life span. Different owners care for their horses in different ways. There are circumstances where certain supplements can decrease hoof problems potentially minimizing the odds of shodding a horse. Horses can be evaluated on a nutritional basis to determine if all essential vitamin and mineral levels are being met. The B vitamin Biotin is by far the most important. Biotin supports hoof growth and it can improve weak or cracking hooves. When all the correct nutrition levels have been reached and the hoof is lacking to thrive, a shoe would be the considerate route to attempt. Hooves take a beating when maintenance and trimming are not kept up, therefore, to keep a peak conditioned hoof, scheduled trimming and filing are required. Shodding a horse is not always chosen because needed supplements are being neglected by the current owner.

Shoes may be the answer to an ongoing hoof deficiency initiated from the previous owner.

It is no secret that going barefoot and free may be the best for some riding disciplines, but having the appropriate shoes frequently maintained on a horse that potentially needs hoof impact protection is an important obligation an owner has to a horse. The argument over what is humane and the approach to getting a sound hoof is derived differently in the equine industry. In the end, the ultimate goal is the horse's sound comfort and success in the job they are performing. Opinions and experiences are important to hear from all angles, in addition to considering the pros and cons. It is best to evaluate each circumstance differently because no two horses are the same. What is good for a horse in one area might not be the solution for a horse in a different area. The idea is to decode whether or not shoes are the proper solution to hoof deficiencies. The answer I have to lean toward is if the shoe fits then wear it.

# THE STORY IN YOU

## BY MELINA PATTERSON, BUTTS COUNTY

Diary Entry Number One: July 31st, 2017

Dear Diary,

My name is Melina Patterson, I just turned sixteen, and I am in tenth grade. My mom and dad moved my two sisters and I out to a farm when the three of us were very young. We grew up feeding the goats, watching the chicks hatch, and eating fresh vegetables out of our garden. I have only been on a plane once, and it was to Kansas, but my family takes long RV trips at least twice a year, so I have seen some of what the world has to offer. For the most part, I stay in my small town in Butts County, just waiting for the new coffee shop to start hiring again.

Earlier this year, my family started fostering two little boys. Our plan was to foster them for as long as possible and not get our hopes up, but we were all kidding ourselves when they came and made us smile, laugh, and cry day after day.

Signed,

Melina

Stories are everywhere. Some are found in dreams, others in memories; they are even found in the diary entries of a teenager, but no matter where they are found, they should all be told. As I said, my name is Melina Patterson. I have been writing books for as long as I can remember, but in August of 2016, I began writing a fictional novel. I finished it in a

year and, in August of 2017, I began the editing process. It may not be a New York Times best seller, but it is a story and I created it, and I am telling it. I hope that with the help of this article, you will be comfortable telling the story you possess.

Diary Entry Number Two: August 15th, 2017

Dear Diary,

I was working with some 4-Hers and one of them told me that my foster brother was saying bad things about women at his school. I was disgusted. I don't do much on the weekends, and I like things to be clean, so he sees me cleaning for the majority of the time he is home. The rest of my time is spent playing with him. How can he tell people that girls don't do anything, when all my sisters and I do is work to make him happy? I knew fostering would be hard, but I still thought it meant I was getting new siblings, not one sibling and a disrespectful stranger.

Signed,

Melina

Inspiration will only get you so far, and if you really want to put your story down on paper, you're going to have to just do it like Nike. If writers only wrote off inspiration, the sixth book of the Harry Potter series never would have been written. To help you to be a consistent writer, I have devised six steps.



Step One: The Main Character. To be able to write what happens to your character, you have to know your character. This means you will need to know how they look, what they are wearing, and how they talk, along with their backstory. Their backstory will be very important, because it will explain why they react to situations the way they do in the present based on their past.

Step Two: The Background Characters. In any story, there is more than one important character. Each character will need to have their own personality, back story, and relationship to the main character. I like to split my characters up in groups: Love Interest, Ally, and Mentor. Then, describe them like you did the main character, except for the backstory. The backstory of the characters in the background shouldn't be as vivid as the main character's back story, meaning, it should be more like a fact sheet than a planned history.

Planning the villain's role is going to be more difficult, so you will need to do it separate to the rest of the characters. Fiction villains and nonfictional villains are very different subjects to write about. If your villain is fictional, then you can know their backstory and their motives. But, if your story is nonfictional, then you won't have that information. The villains we see in our daily lives just do evil and leave us asking, Why? .

Diary Entry Number Five: October 23rd,

2017

Dear Diary,

Mom and Dad are talking about court dates, but not for adoption. Apparently, someone in the system is trying to take the boys away. I'm getting nervous, and I don't understand why this lady is doing this. I met her one time and she said she didn't watch Netflix or read books, so we didn't really talk about anything. There's no way she remembers my name and she has no idea who I am, so why is she going after my family like this? I haven't seen her once since she came to our house months ago, and suddenly she is trying to take them away! I am very angry and confused.

Signed,

Melina

Step Three: Your Story Structure. Your story needs to have structure before you begin, so that there are no snags in the writing process. Think of it like the skeleton of your book, and as you write, you are adding the muscles and ligaments and eventually you will have the full body. You will want to start by planning where the story begins and ends. Then, plan the climax and the denouement, and finally, the subplots.

The climax is the peak of the story, and conflict is the basis of it. Conflict brings emotion, which brings readers. When reading a book, a reader wants to feel emotions, that is why it is crucial to get the climax right.

The denouement is the decent from the mountain peak that we just ventured up in the climax. It is the end of the

conflict. It is when everything is resolved, and the dust is beginning to settle. In the denouement, one emotion should be felt over all the rest. Whatever ending your climax has, whether it is victory or sorrow, that emotion should possess the reader over all others.

After you have those key points, plan out your subplots. Things like quarrels with the lover, nightmares that the main character is having, or flashbacks. Knowing when these scenes will happen will help you to get the story on the page in its entirety.

Step Four: The Writing Process. Don't worry about grammar or punctuation, just start writing. Make yourself daily goals like five pages a day. When you find it is hard to write, like if you are procrastinating or you just can't decide what is supposed to happen next, make yourself more comfortable. I, personally, write on my bed with a candle burning and some music playing in the background, but that may not help you. If you can't find your Comfortable Place just keep experimenting until you do!

Step Five: The Editing Process. Editing isn't hard or easy, it is just slow. You will spend long hours over your work with a pen, or on your computer, whichever you prefer. On the first three edit-throughs you will be looking for unnecessary commas, typos, and paragraph placement. On the last few edit-throughs you will be moving scenes around and taking some out to help the reader not have to work so hard to enjoy your novel.

Diary Entry Number Six: November 15th, 2017

Dear Diary,

Today I was editing my book in my room, when I heard the boys get home from school. They came stomping up the wooden stairs, like they always do, and I heard them throw their book bags on the floor. I sat up in bed, knowing they were coming to talk to me and told myself to be patient, because, on this particular day, I just wanted to be alone. They came in my room and the older one began talking about his day, while the younger one jumped up on my bed to sit with me.

What are you doing? The younger one asked.

I am working on my book. I answered. What are you doing?

Noffin'. He answered, with his cute, little-kid accent. We sat and talked for a while, then the older one asked when he could read my book.

You can read it when it is finished if you want. I answered, not wanting him to read a half-finished book.

Signed,

Melina

Diary Entry Number Seven: December 16th, 2017

Dear Diary,

I have been doing Joshua's Law for three days straight and I've barely left my room. This is the most exhausting thing I have ever done in my life. The highlight of my day was when the younger boy came to my room to ask if I wanted to play with him.

No, not right now. I have to finish this. I answered. Instead of leaving, he brought paper and crayons in my room to color on

the floor while I did my work. I love him.

Signed,

Melina

Step Six: Publishing. This is the hardest part of book making. You will have to send multiple copies of your books to multiple publishers to try and get them to take your book. There are multiple book festivals that publishers go to looking for new projects, so taking copies of your book to those festivals is a great way to get your name out there. Having a finished and edited story is the best feeling in the world. Not getting it published can take that feeling away, don't let it. Be proud of your work and show as many people as possible. Let anyone and everyone read it.

Diary Entry Number Eight: January 8th,  
2017

Dear Diary,

I think I'm done writing. Today, the boys left and went to another foster home. The woman who was attacking my family told the older boy that she could get him to his family if they left our house. So, the older boy told her that we were treating him badly. Now he is somewhere else, and he has to live with that for the rest of his life. Explain to me how that will better the lives of those boys.

The worst part of all of it was telling my best friend that she would never see them again, and she wouldn't get to say goodbye.

Diary Entry Number Nine: February 21st,  
2017

Dear Diary,

The boys left a month ago and my family is still grieving, but I know what I

want to do as a career now. I want to be a teacher in foreign countries and an author. Traveling has always been my dream, and I've always wanted to go on a longer plane ride than Kansas. I want to teach kids, because I was such a small part of those boys' lives, but I made such a big impact. I want to do that for other kids too. To be an author would be to touch others with my words, and that is my ultimate goal in life. To make people feel emotions through the stories that I come up with. I will do my best not to change my story and to tell it to the best of my ability. To quote one of my favorite authors, Mark Zusak, I have hated words and I have loved them, and I hope I have made them right.

Sincerely,

Melina

There is a story in all of us. Some of our stories are just getting started and have the potential for greatness, other stories are reaching their ending. No matter where your story is, it deserves to be told in the best way possible: Through a book. I hope that my words have inspired you to tell your story, and I hope that one day you will read my story, and I will read yours.



# SUBMIT TO BEST BETTER

We want your work for the second issue of Best Better! Ask your local Extension office for more information about when submissions open, and how to submit your work!

Have a favorite photograph from your last vacation, or a short story you've been dying to share? Send it to Best Better!

**For our next issue:**

**Special Challenge!**

**Send us some art or writing (300 words or less please) about Rock Eagle. Share your favorite memories, tell us what it means to you, or tell a funny story! Anything that shows what makes Rock Eagle the best 4-H Center in the country!**



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"Backyard Bonnie" by Sophia Rodriguez, Liberty County