

BEYOND PAPER

Solace In Sonder



WHAT COMES NEXT?

VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 01

FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Dear Reader,

When given the task to rebrand and take on bringing back our school's print magazine, I asked myself and my team of 19 staff writers, illustrators, and editors what would represent this new chapter of our department, but also ourselves?

For the past three years, I have spent every first period in room 1413, a space where different worlds collide. I feel grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from writers of all different grades and experiences. Most days, it felt like I was part of the cool kids club, where I had a plethora of older people to go to for advice and help. But like most things in life, people left and then came anew. This constant cycle of beginnings and ends is one that I am now looking back on as I stand at a pivotal point in my own journey. One where the end is opening its door and the old is waving goodbye.

Thus, I posed the question: What comes next?

Specifically, what represents the culmination of my time in this program, but also what does that look like for other people in their own point in life? "What comes after a storm?" is a common question that everyday people ask themselves. For me, it wasn't just about the storms that we visually see but the ones that we face every single day. So came the question.

For the past three months, I have asked the newsroom to consider what is next in their own lives, in particular the solace or the peace and comfort we find knowing that out in the world, on the sidewalks and streets we all cross, each passerby, whether stranger or friend, has a vivid and complex experience just like you and me; Sonder. While I do realize the vagueness of what I asked, I hoped that my writers could push themselves beyond their comfort zone and dig into their own stories awaiting to be written. And they did.

I have gone through each story brimming with creativity, vulnerability, and diverse experiences; I have combed through each page and seen firsthand the hours spent by our designer and illustrators, crafting each story and magazine spread to become its own. Through it all, I have come to understand sides to the writers in the newsroom that I wouldn't have known otherwise.

I am proud of the immense work this group of writers has accomplished, and I find solace in the fact that this is something I get to leave behind to the program that has played such a big role in my life. I hope that when you are reading these stories, you find glimpses of yourselves and maybe even find solace in the fact that you are not alone. So without further ado, I present: Beyond Paper: Solace in Sonder.

Zinna Park

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

CONTENTS

- 03 GETTING OLDER AND WISER**
The Art of Growing Into Who We Are Meant to Be
By: Riya Dasgupta, Kelsio Lo, Zinna Park, and Ava Wine
- 06 QUIZ: WHICH WASHINGTON ACTIVITY SUITS YOU?**
Created By: Riya Dasgupta
- 09 DROP THE HAMMER:**
The Untold Stories of Evergreen Speedway's Hardest Fighters
By: Jayden Luse
- 11 SEA, SOLITUDE, AND SILENCE:**
Discovering Community in the San Juan Islands
By: Kate Bevins
- 14 ROAD MAP TO GRADUATION:**
What is your Path Seniors?
Created By: Riya Dasgupta
- 15 WHISPERS OF COLOR IN A SILENT ROOM:**
The Role of Art as My Unspoken Voice
By: Artem Babayan
- 17 STICKS AND STONES BREAK MY BONES BUT I'LL KEEP PLAYING:**
A Student Athlete's Journey in Rebounding from Injuries and Navigating Mental Health
By: Cameron Day
- 19 THE REVOLVING DOOR: Q&A With My Senior and Freshman Self**
By: Quincy Nesbit
- 21 STAY IN THE GAME:**
The Uncertainty of Sports Beyond High School
By: Stella Handlin
- 24 GUIDE TO BECOMING A TRUE SEATTLITE:**
10 Things to do in The City of Rain
Created By: Riya Dasgupta
- 25 MY JOURNEY BEING MUSLIM:**
Navigating Faith and Finding Strength in My Identity
By: Zainab Alvi
- 27 CARRYING HOME WITH YOU:**
The Trials and Tribulations of Leaving and Starting Anew
By: Sarah Taimoory
- 29 MORE THAN JUST A TRIP:**
How Travel Shaped My Beliefs About the World
By: Emma Wurster
- 31 ONLINE EXCLUSIVES**
- 32 MANAGING EDITOR'S NOTE**
- 33/ STAFF & CROSSWORD**
Created By: Kelsi Lo
- 35**

GETTING OLDER AND WISER

The Art Of Growing Into Who We Are Meant To Be

Story By: Riya Dasgupta, Kelsi Lo, Zinna Park, Ava Wine

Illustration By: Zinna Park

Senior year is a rite of passage for every highschooler. It is the time of change and the time of looking to the daunting future of...College. Throughout the exhausting nights of college applications, supplementals, you find yourself asking...Who am I as an individual? What is my story? How do I tell this in 650 words? These moments of reflection and thought become the very experiences that we look back on in different times of our lives. The joy, the struggle, and growth in the discovery of ourselves that we find solace in. Below, these excerpts reflect on our unique stories in our paths to the present day. Every story has a beginning and an end, but it is the journey in between that shapes who we are.

- Sincerely, the senior members of the 25-26 Editorial Board

FINDING MYSELF IN MY CULTURE

Most everything about me, from my lack of melanin to family traditions, stands classically American. When a sixth grade classmate learned of my Indian heritage, she startled with an, "Oh! I couldn't tell, don't worry!" From then on, signs everywhere confirmed I was 90% White and 10% Indian, despite my actual 50-50 split. My Baba's cooking was a mystery, each layer of spice too hot for me to stomach. Since I never learned Bengali, he translated phone calls, passing on only what he thought my grandparents wanted to hear.

They never truly knew my brother and I, and we never knew them. And then, a few years ago, my grandfather passed from cancer. The weight of everything I never learned showed me how much my unseen heritage mattered.

I DECIDED TO MASTER EVERYTHING I COULD.

With all the ingredients in our pantry but none of the skill, I fumbled through mediocre online recipes of palak paneer and aloo posto. I wore my singular Kurti to cultural events with a small circle of South Asian friends. But as I delved deeper into my own exploration, something unexpected began to surface: I was more Indian than I had allowed myself to believe. When my dad explained the gods honored at Durga Pooja, I realized many of my childhood storybooks already told their tales.

At a Bengali restaurant with classmates, I effortlessly named dishes, even one I had tried (and failed) to create weeks earlier. My grandmother and I bonded over our "no waste" policy, both of us owning a simple two pairs of shoes.

I WAS NO LONGER 90% AND 10%, BUT 100% INDIAN-AMERICAN.

FINDING MYSELF IN MY ART

Art. A weird genre for me. I never thought of myself as an artistic person, I could never draw anything past a stick figure in elementary school. Through trial and error of several sports, hobbies and workshops in the back of English classrooms,

I DEFINED WHAT ART MEANS TO ME.

Art is an expression of love and it shows up in different ways and through different people. While dance is an art that I know someday my body will no longer express, the art of teaching will have its turn, stronger than ever. My dad wanted to be a musician, while my mom wanted to write children's stories

They never pressured me to pick up a guitar or draft, but their passion for arts still made its way to me.

MUSIC BECAME MOVEMENT AND STORIES BECAME ARTICLES.

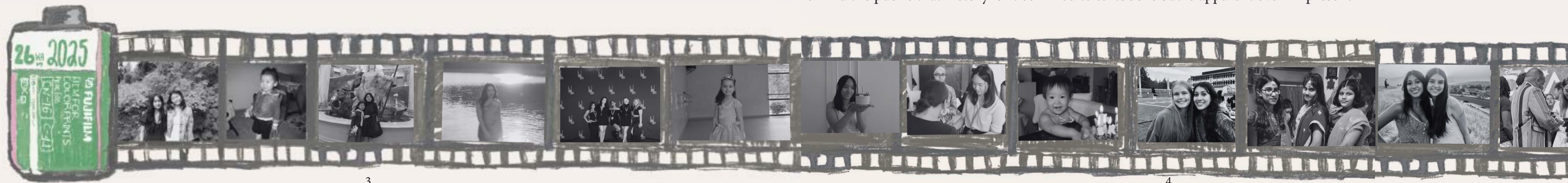
While dance is an art that I know someday my body will no longer express, the art of teaching will have its turn, stronger than ever. I will perform on the stages my dad imagined when he played guitar for me as a baby, I will write stories and have the power to be heard for my mother, who showed me what quiet

FINDING MYSELF IN MY WORDS

"Immigration is actually reducing diversity ... The foreign students' population is mostly Chinese or Indian." said Jon Feere, the current ICE chief of staff, my interviewee. Going into the interview, I knew we wouldn't agree, but I'd never imagined that he would twist the facts to undermine the struggles of millions across the country — myself included.

The mostly "Chinese or Indian" students he described were my family, friends, community. Yet, to him, they were just numbers on a screen. As I calmed down, I realized his words shouldn't have shocked me. I've seen the same indifference on the tired faces of my peers during history lectures about the Chinese Exclusion Act, which rang as another reminder of how little has changed over the last century. Yet, I knew it was naive to expect people to abandon the comfort of desensitization.

Growing up, I was surrounded by storytellers: history teachers, journalists, and parents who pushed me to be civically aware. But it wasn't until my own life became the subject that I understood the true power behind how stories are told. I aim to become a journalist that can give voice to those who are reduced to data points and to remind the public that history isn't confined to textbooks but is apparent even in present



policies. Journalism is a remedy, a tool, and it is **HOW I RECLAIM POWER, ensuring that the PEOPLE BEHIND THE HEADLINES ARE SEEN, HEARD, AND REMEMBERED.**



FINDING MYSELF IN MY NAME

I am the progeny of defiance. The spark alighted when I was just five years old and my 'normal' changed in ways I could have never imagined...It was the day I was told I would no longer be a 'Kim' but a 'Park'. Growing up in a culture where surname comes first, where lineage carries weight and history, it was as if the axis fell off balance. My mother became the first to defy it.

A new form of defiance revealed itself years later at a local candidate forum. A politician spoke about the rising epidemic of loneliness, his words echoed through the air, claiming that breakdowns of families were to blame. Rhetoric that cast children raised by single parents or grandparents as the root of society's problems. As the weight of his words settled, something inside me shifted. I didn't just disagree with the rhetoric, I rejected it.

IT WASN'T ENOUGH TO SIMPLY WRITE MY NAME. I HAD TO LIVE IT, STRENGTHEN IT, AND CARRY IT WITH MY HEAD HELD UP HIGH.

Today, I am one of two in my family to keep this name alive. A second generation daughter, a first generation American, placing roots where my family's story is still being written. The branches of my lineage spread wider through the testament of my journey as a maker of new beginnings and an advocate for the enduring strength of unconventional families like mine. I am proud to carry on this name of a resilient family of working-class people, the name of a daughter of four who dared to dream, and of a young girl who has learned to find herself in the stories she carries forward. Each syllable and each letter shapes who I unapologetically am.

A LISTENER. A CHANGE-SEEKER. A PARK.



Which Washington

ACTIVITY SUITS YOU?

A fun quiz designed to get you off your phone and go outside!

1. YOUR IDEAL PACE FOR A DAY OFF IS...

- A. SLOW, SCENIC, AND PEACEFUL
- B. ACTIVE AND ENERGIZING
- C. RELAXED BUT WITH THINGS TO EXPLORE

4. WHAT SOUNDS MOST EXCITING RIGHT NOW?

- A. SITTING BACK AND WATCHING LIFE UNFOLD AROUND YOU
- B. ACCOMPLISHING AND CONQUERING!
- C. WANDERING AROUND WITH PERFECT FREEDOM

2. WHAT KIND OF VIEW MAKES YOU HAPPIEST?

- A. WATER STRETCHING OUT FOREVER
- B. TREES, MOUNTAINS, OR OVERLOOKS
- C. CHARMING STREETS AND LOCAL SHOPS

5. YOU WANT THIS TRIP TO MAKE YOU FEEL...

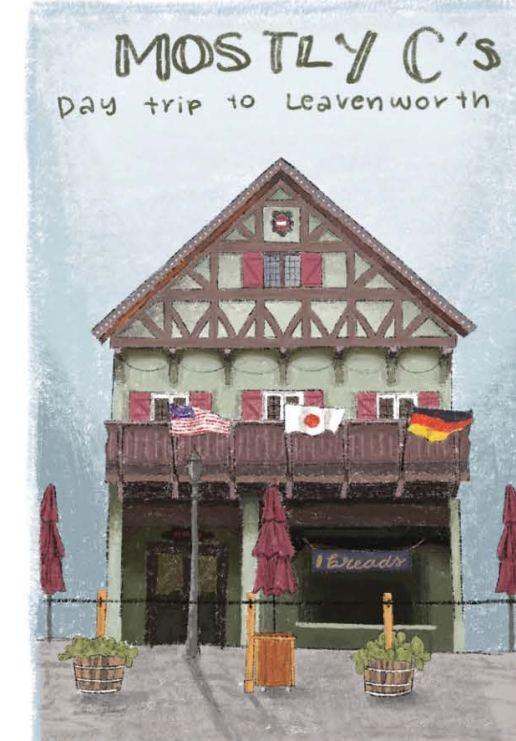
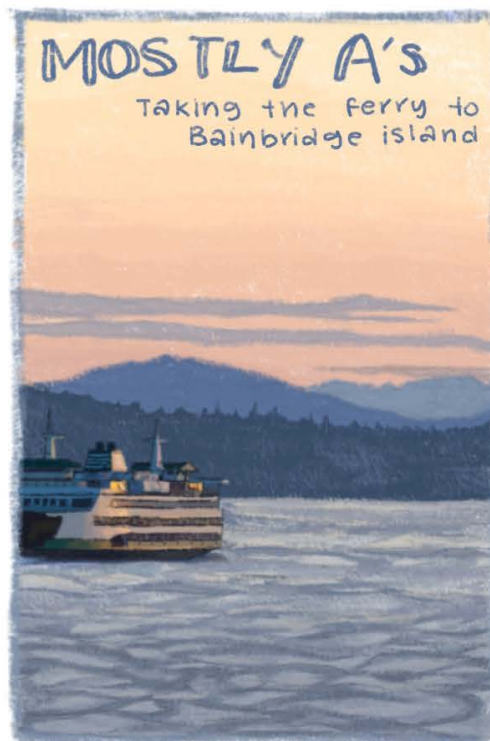
- A. CALM AND REFRESHED
- B. PROUD AND ENERGIZED
- C. COZY AND INSPIRED

3. YOUR PERFECT OUTFIT INCLUDES...

- A. LAYERS FOR THE BREEZE AND COMFY SHOES
- B. ATHLETIC CLOTHES AND STURDY SNEAKERS
- C. A CUTE OUTFIT YOU CAN WALK AROUND IN

6. YOUR FAVORITE KIND OF MEMORY IS...

- A. A QUIET MOMENT YOU'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER
- B. A CHALLENGE YOU OVERCAME
- C. A SMALL, UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY



The grandstands shake as 2,800 Pounds of sheet metal and motor push through the air at 110 Miles an hour that is when you know you are at Evergreen Speedway. Evergreen Speedway is where race winners and champions are decided and crowned. It is here where NASCAR champion Kevin Harvick himself tested his mettle, racing alongside drivers in a variety of cars. Late models, Legends, Outlaw figure 8, Super Stuck Figure 8 and Street Stocks tear up the track, each one bringing its own flair to the historic speedway.

As someone who has raced for two years at Washington's Evergreen Speedway, I have seen all the stories: from the highs of glistening trophies to the lows of wrecked cars. Everyone who is a champion in racing has gone through both. They have all come back stronger from their lows, and they all worked their way to the top. We look at these resilient fighters and their stories from crashes to champions and wonder how do these racers rise from their downfalls and appear anew?

The roar of engines is unmistakable, you can feel the track vibrate under your feet. The first car to take its place on the track is Braeden Wagar, the 2025 INEX Legend Champion. Legends are far from your typical race car. Weighing at just 1,200 pounds and modeled after the classic 1934 Ford Coupe, these pint-sized machines punch well above their weight, reaching speeds upward of 90 miles an hour at Evergreen Speedway. Wagar's car is an example of a masterclass in agility but the rise to the top was not always easy. The 2024 season was a rollercoaster of misfortune: multiple accidents plagued his season including a massive hit to the outside wall causing damage that went unnoticed for months before it was caught. The damage proved to be a significant obstacle in Wagar's season as he was left with just three more points-paying races at Evergreen Speedway to manage something of the season.

Wagar managed to fix the bent rear, but luck was still not on his side. He soon found himself tangled in one wreck after another. One of the worst came during the season opener. The rain had turned the track slick, leaving Wagar and a competitor fighting for grip. As they navigated the tricky corners the opposing car contacted Wagar, sending him straight into the wall in a crash that would end both drivers' races.

It was a crushing blow for Wagar, the kind that would eventually lead to an unfortunate season. In the end, Wagar ended up coming short of the championship by 76 points in 2024 and finished second in the standings. A heartbreak after a season full of relentless setbacks.

This year, Wagar came out of the gates strong and won his very first points paying race in over a year. It was a major win and he did not just stop there. Wagar went on to secure the championship by 95 points! It was the biggest legends division victory in the last five years at Evergreen Speedway. When I caught up with him, I had to ask: what made this year different after the struggles of 2024?

“HONESTLY, I WAS ALSO TOO AGGRESSIVE LAST YEAR, [...] I GOT CAUGHT UP IN INCIDENTS THAT JUST KEPT SETTING ME BACK.”

But it was not just his driving that changed. Wagar credits a lot of his newfound speed to the help he received from other racers and mechanics—guys like Kyle Lang, Ricky Arnold and Clint Lang—who helped fine tune Wagar's car and made sure it was running at its best. Their support was a crucial part in helping him be on top of the Evergreen Speedway INEX legends division.

This season, Wagar came out with a strong start winning four of the first six Evergreen season races. The second half of his run proved rockier as he went without a win in the final five races, due to obstacles with the setup of the car.



Despite the bumps along the way, Wagar feels confident about the future. He attests to how he and his team will find their way back to the top and rise above the adversity that they have faced over and over again.



The INEX Legends racing division is one of the many thrilling cars that race at Evergreen Speedway. For rookies though the pressure is undeniable, they are expected to prove themselves, earn respect, and fight for their place in a competitive field. Late models, in particular, are massive machines, weighing nearly 3,000 pounds. Late Models are the cars that make everyone's hearts skip a beat. They are considered the fastest cars that race at the speedway, adding another layer of intensity to an already high-stakes environment.

In 2025, Kyle Lang, the Late Model Rookie of the year, found out how intense late Models would be the hard way. Throughout the season, he got caught up in multiple accidents, including a brutal hit into a tractor tire after spinning out on a restart. It was looking like a year to forget for the Lang team, but like any rookie, Lang knew that every setback was just part of the road to proving he belonged. After Lang's hard hit, the team had just three weeks before their next race. The front clip was destroyed and would need replacing. Lang would have to remove the motor, weld a new frame onto the front of the car and then put the motor back in. The setback would cost Lang thousands and include many late nights but they got it done in just three weeks.

“Some nights we were in the shop till one or two in the morning just making sure we would make it back,” Lang said. But those long hours and sleepless nights paid off. In the end, his perseverance helped him secure Rookie of the Year through a tiebreaker.

“IT WASN'T EVEN ABOUT THE TROPHY. IT WAS ABOUT PROVING TO MYSELF I CAN TAKE HITS AND COME BACK.”

The hits a driver takes only serve to make them stronger on the track, but when they lose, it feels as though they have let everyone down—from the people in the workshop to those at the racetrack that have invested their time and money. What people often overlook about motorsports is the relentless behind-the-scenes grind that teams put in long before the cars even hit the racetrack. Whether it is noticed in a victory or if it goes unnoticed and ends with a wrecked racecar, the hours spent working on the car is rarely seen. Hands covered in grease, late nights, springs being changed, and adjustments made—all for fractions of a second that can make or break a lap time. It does not matter if the car crosses the finish line 30th or first, the work and the dedication is the same. Everyone is pushing for the same goal to be the best. These moments of triumphs, and setbacks are just a few of the many stories in motorsports of drivers and teams rising from the ashes, who rebuild and push forward even when the odds are stacked against them. That is what makes racing so electrifying: the lows are crushing, but when you hit the high, it is incomparable, like a pure wave of adrenaline, joy and pride in your team and in yourself. It is the kind of sport where every moment of struggle is worth it for that breakthrough moment of glory, knowing the blood sweat and tears that brought you to that point has all been worth it.



Braeden Wagar on the left and Kyle Lang on the right, Lang Proudly holds his plaque for winning the 2024 INEX Legend championship. These photos were taken at the Evergreen Speedway reward banquet on January 18*, 2024.

SEA, SOLITUDE, AND SILENCE

Discovering Community in the San Juan Islands

Story and Photos by: Kate Bevins

Just a two-hour ferry ride outside of the bustling, noisy city of Seattle lies its complete opposite: San Juan Island, a haven serving as a symbol of tranquility for locals and visitors alike. I have been captivated by the beauty of this island for many years. It flows with a rich, lengthy history, and its entrancing silence is often only interrupted by the call of an eagle or the sound of crashing waves. Tourists across the Pacific Northwest are drawn in to its wildlife, culture, and undeniable charm, leading to major economic stimulation for the island, with tourism generating 299 million dollars in 2023 according to the San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau annual report.

Even in the cold depths of November, tourists can still be found making the journey to the island. When I asked ferry travelers Beth and Bob about their journey, they said they had driven five hours from just east of Salem Oregon to explore the waterfront, eat, and shop in the famous Friday Harbor. Knowing how huge a role tourism plays on San Juan Island, I began to ask myself how both tourism and preservation can work in such perfect harmony when I so often hear about tourism stripping vacation destinations of their unique features and landscape. To discover the answer to this question, I decided to dive deeper into how San Juan Island successfully embraces development while also protecting and educating visitors on its culture and history.

As a regular visitor to San Juan Island, what initially brought me (and thousands of others)

to the island is the stunning nature and wildlife. With unique birds, whale watching, and hundreds of hikes, the island prides itself on its emphasis on wildlife conservation, with organizations like the San Juan Islands Conservation District

“COMMITTED TO CONSERVING AND ENHANCING NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE SAN JUAN ISLANDS FOR FARMING, WILDLIFE, PUBLIC HEALTH, FORESTRY, RECREATION AND RESIDENTIAL USES.”

Protecting the island’s natural resources not only benefits preservation of the island, but it attracts visitors to the island, which in turn generates revenue. Currently, the San Juan preservation trust has protected 19,000 acres of land across all the San Juans and is continuing to grow with the Mt. Ben West Preserve on San Juan Island now in progress. The island also features over 20 hiking trails, allowing visitors to fully immerse themselves in the nature the island has to offer. Having ventured through two of the hiking trails myself, the Coastal Bluffs and the South Beach Trail, I find nothing more rewarding than reaching the end of a long hike and standing on a cliff overlooking the endless, gorgeous blue Puget Sound.



One of the main reasons tourism has been so beneficial to the island is the fact that visitors often come to the island seeking to reconnect with nature. This brings a group of people who want to appreciate the island in all its glory, not take advantage of it. The diverse animals and plants on San Juan Island also allow many restaurants on the island to source locally and create sought-after island cuisine. One amazing spot is San Juan Brewing Company, a restaurant nestled in Friday Harbor, known for its Island brewed beer and fresh sandwiches, burgers, and salads. Upon walking into this cozy, welcoming restaurant, I could immediately feel the unique sense of community and vibrant charm the island displays in its array of diverse restaurants and businesses. Many small businesses utilize local products, including San Juan Sea Salt, farming salt from seawater on the beaches of San Juan Island and implementing it in a variety of seasonings, caramels, and flavored salts.

Another unique aspect of the San Juans is the historical gems featured around the island. These locations are both tourist hotspots and places to reflect deeply on how the land has changed over time. San Juan Island was the location of the Pig War, a conflict that led the island to be inhabited by the British and US military for 12 years. It is easy to forget how San Juan Island has a history of conflict, as it has

become synonymous with peace and a small-town feel. However, sprinkles of its rich history still stand today. The San Juan Island National Historical Park is one example of this. Within this park lies both a former American and English military camp with historical buildings, and a visitors’ center filled with a variety of books and guides. Incorporating education into a tourist site is crucial because it creates an immersive experience while also encouraging sustainability and ethical observance of the island. On San Juan Island, tourism has done wonders to support the businesses that bring this island its vibrance and culture. Leslie Woods has lived on the island for two years after leaving the heat and tropics of Hawaii: drawn to the colder weather of the Pacific Northwest. When asked whether she views tourism as beneficial for the island, she believes, despite the annoyance of very overpriced goods,

“PEOPLE ARE PUTTING MONEY INTO KEEPING THEIR STOREFRONT NICE BECAUSE THEY’RE MAKING GOOD MONEY. TO ME, [THIS] IS A HUGE CONTRAST WITH SEATTLE.”

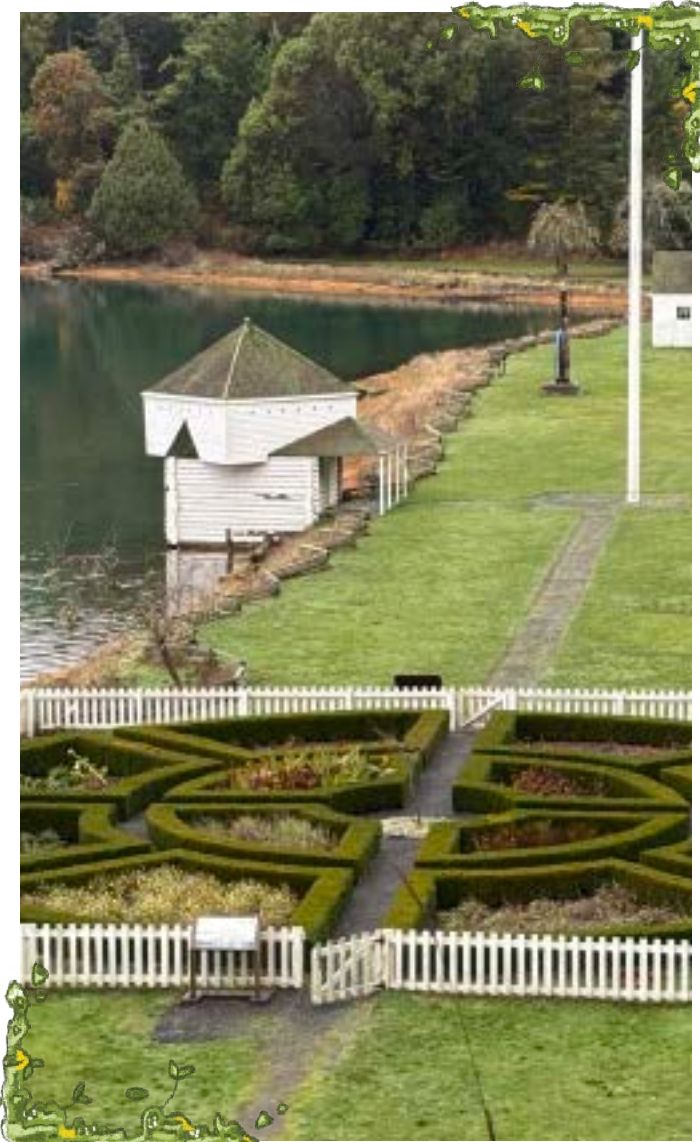
According to The San Juan Island Visitor's Bureau, the lodging and sales tax revenue from visitors is thoughtfully utilized, not simply cycled back into the tourism industry. Money is invested back into institutions fundamental to the island, including

“THE SAN JUAN COUNTY FAIR, COUNTY PARKS, MUSEUMS, COMMUNITY THEATRES/CENTERS, LITERARY AND MUSIC EVENTS, FARMERS MARKETS, FILM FESTIVALS, AND MUCH MORE.”

With the money going back to the people who deserve it most, a positive relationship is formed between tourists and locals on the island.



Looking back on my travels, my favorite parts of the San Juan Island are the parts of it unexplainable until one visits the island for themselves. My family and I come back to it time and time again, and it has been a place of peace even during the most unstable points in my life. When I step onto the ferry and stare out the window at the greenish blue hues of the water, I know my mind will be completely at rest, at least for a while. It is not the tourist attractions or the shopping district that comes to mind when I think about my favorite memories. Instead, it is walking along an empty, rocky beach as I hear nothing but rain pouring down on the crashing waves or having a conversation with a local at the farmer's market that makes me smile. Tourism breathes even more life into this already vibrant island, filling it with visitors who long for the comfort, history, and liveliness the island brings, an irreplaceable magic that will keep people coming for generations to come.



WHISPERS OF COLOR IN A SILENT ROOM

The Role of Art as My Unspoken Voice

Story and Illustrations by: Artem Babayan

I pick up the pencil, lying on the table in the silence of the room. Being lured into the sound of the graphite scratching against the paper with the dark grey line that seems to hold meaning. My first memory of art started when I was in kindergarten, that is where I first started doodling. I was at my grandma's house and asked her for a piece of paper and some colored pencils. I set the paper down, followed by three colored pencils, and suddenly began to draw out of nowhere. The sky, the grass, and even at times myself, it would all come alive on the page. That moment ignited a cycle of artistic passion.



My journey through art has impacted all different parts of my life, it has impacted the way my family views me and their perspective of who I am. I am considered the artist of the family, as I am the only one who draws or paints. My personal time would consist of going to art classes once a week and coming back home with a new piece of art to amaze my parents. Smiles on their faces, and glee in my eyes. Every once in a while, my mom would come into my room, and compare how natural it looks, compared to my brothers' rooms. It was these moments where my room started to go beyond a finite space of modern cleanliness but something that was evolving into a wild personality of its own. My room, inspired by nature, became a source of motivation, where I would

create my pieces, hang them, and find solace in how they would blend in perfectly. From trees to plants and animals, I filled my space with the natural world.

I can recall the countless times my mom walks into my room, bombarding me with how my room is 'too much,' I would always take it as a compliment, in my world of art I became more aware to the artistic and cozy nature of my room, matching with almost every work of art I created. To me, every piece of art deserved its place.

High school became a pivotal moment in my art journey, I thought of all the unique classes, opportunities, and tons of new friends that I would make. Most importantly, I thought about the opportunities to let my creativity expand, and narrow my focus on art. As a freshman this year, I chose studio art as one of my electives. Most people in that class chose to have it for one semester, but I decided to take it for both semesters. Not only does focusing more on art almost every day help me with practice, but it also helps with getting used to art a lot more. Many days, I walk through the art hallway and admire all the works of art others have created, knowing someday I could do the same, if not better. It was this feeling of immersing myself in art that has shown growth in who I am. During middle school and throughout almost all of summer, I took a break from art. I did not feel motivated to pick up the pen again, but high school broke that habit. I walk into class every day wondering if we will start doing something new that day, feeling passionate and ready to dive in.

Every time I finish an artwork piece done in class, I have never felt more excited to bring it home. Focusing on colors and learning about how color theory works during class has made me more attentive about certain objects and their details. I look around my surroundings with

an artistic eye, of how light reflects, preserves, and blends. Art will always play a big part in my high school experience, and I would not have it any other way.

One thing I am proud of is how art has shaped the way I form friendships and how it allows me to connect with a multitude of people. During studio art in school, I chat with my friends, answer their questions, and have a fun time with them coloring, sketching, and starting new projects. When I used to take art classes during the summer, I would go with one of my best friends, and we would laugh, look at each other's progress, and thrive with the sounds of the gliding paintbrushes against our canvases. There are moments when I realize I am not the only one in the school who enjoys sketching, painting, doodling, and having an artistic state of mind. Knowing I am not alone makes me feel heard and feel appreciated for what I do. Getting compliments from my friends who have better art skills than I do myself, makes me confident. That feeling of looking through reference pictures on Pinterest with your friends going, "yes, that is the one!"

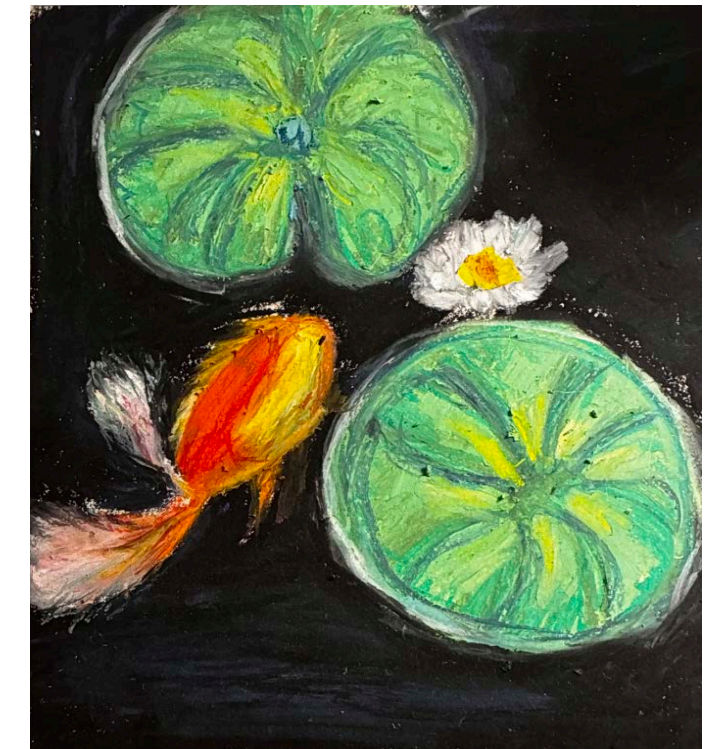
"IT IS A STATE OF HAPPINESS THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO EXPLAIN WITHOUT THE AUDIENCE GETTING CONFUSED."



Having conversations with your friends about art makes you realize how much you actually know, which is something everybody enjoys at some

point, giving a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Art is seen as a universal medium known for how it allows others to express themselves, but how does it allow me to express myself? If you walk into my room and start looking at my pieces of art, you will notice a pattern.



Almost everything has something related to nature. The trees, the leaves, and the different shades of green. Every piece has its own form of creativity, and concentration through the process of creation. One thing about me is that I love nature. Anything green and I will stare at it for a good thirty seconds before saying something about it. If someone took me to a jungle, I would bring my stand, canvas, my paints, and my brushes all with me on that trip to create something I would get attached to very quickly. The way the vines hang low, the way it is calming your eyes with its dark, grey shades of green. I relish in this love of mine.

Art allows me to express my creativity, and how I see the outside world nobody pays attention to. It pushes me to see the small things rather than just what is seen through the naked eye. Simple things have their own way of beauty, appreciated by a small percentage of people. Nature is often overlooked. To many, a leaf is just a leaf, yet that leaf once grew, fell off its tree, and got carried away by the wind. I've learned that every leaf has its own story, including my own.

STICKS AND STONES BREAK MY BONES, BUT I'LL KEEP PLAYING:

A Student Athlete's Journey in Rebounding from Injuries and Navigating Mental Health

Story by: Cameron Day
Illustrations by: Riya Dasgupta

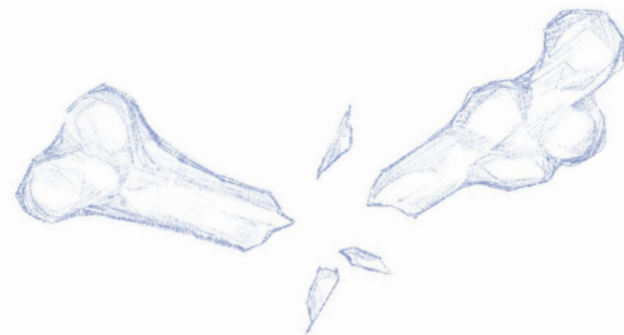
The locker room hums with excitement as you get ready to head onto the field. The air is thick with anticipation. Week one of the season is here with ten games ahead. The excitement for the opportunity that your coach gave you to go out and perform pushes you, but it is all cut short. You hear a pop. The pain of the injury blurs your mind. Fear of missing the rest of the season becomes imminent. Players crowd around, the sidelines are silent as they take in the seriousness of the injury. The medical team carts you off the field, then it hits. The realization and uncertainty that you might never play your sport again.

Teenagers and professional athletes around the world are very familiar with the feeling of getting injured. In fact, according to John Hopkins Medicine, "about 30 million children and teens participate in some form of organized sports, and more than 3.5 million injuries each year." The aftermath of these injuries is different for everyone. Some players start playing sports again right after recovering while others develop a fear of re-injury and never play sports again.

Gabe Grutzner, a highschool freshman has spent more time on the field and court than off it. Since he was two years old he has been in motion. From the pounding of his feet on the track, hands gripping a basketball, or his body crashing into tackles on the football field he is no stranger to the lingering effects of sports injuries.

Grutzner's body bears the marks of years of athletic pursuit: an impinged lower back, a fractured growth plate, and a torn shoulder just to say the least. Yet through each injury, Grutzner has learned to push through, his determination constant as his skills. Despite his perseverance and passion, Grutzner has been no stranger to the mental impacts and anxiety that come with experiencing a sports injury.

When asked about the pain and the many injuries that he has gone through, Grutzner painfully recalls how he dealt with a fractured growth plate; noting that it was the longest injury he had to recover from. From the pain radiating through his limb as well as the swelling and tenderness so severe he could barely move, let alone play. The doctors explained that it was a break in the soft area of cartilage at the ends of his bones, affecting the growth plate.



These injuries are very common as famous athletes like Tony Romo, Tiger Woods, Peyton Manning, Dwight Howard, Usain Bolt, and Ronnie Coleman have all suffered from the same injuries.

The weight of his injuries has not just been physical for Grutzner. When he talks about the toughest moments, his expression reveals the mental toll. "I was heartbroken (that) I couldn't play." For student athletes like Grutzner, who had spent most of his life immersed in sports the loss moved beyond the physical implications but also a mental one; it was the loss of identity and feeling unmoored.

This sense of uncertainty is common for athletes who suffer from injuries that take months, or even years to heal. According to Boston Children's Hospital, "A recent literature review by Melissa Christino (M.D.) and her colleagues reinforced the fact that injury and healing involve both the body and the mind. Certain psychological responses can complicate the healing process



particularly when an injury is extensive or requires surgery." Traumatic and more serious injuries like spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, bone fractures, ligament tears, and torn ACLs force athletes to confront the question of what the future holds. For Grutzner these were the implications that he had to consider, the mental strain of wondering if his love for the game would ever be the same.

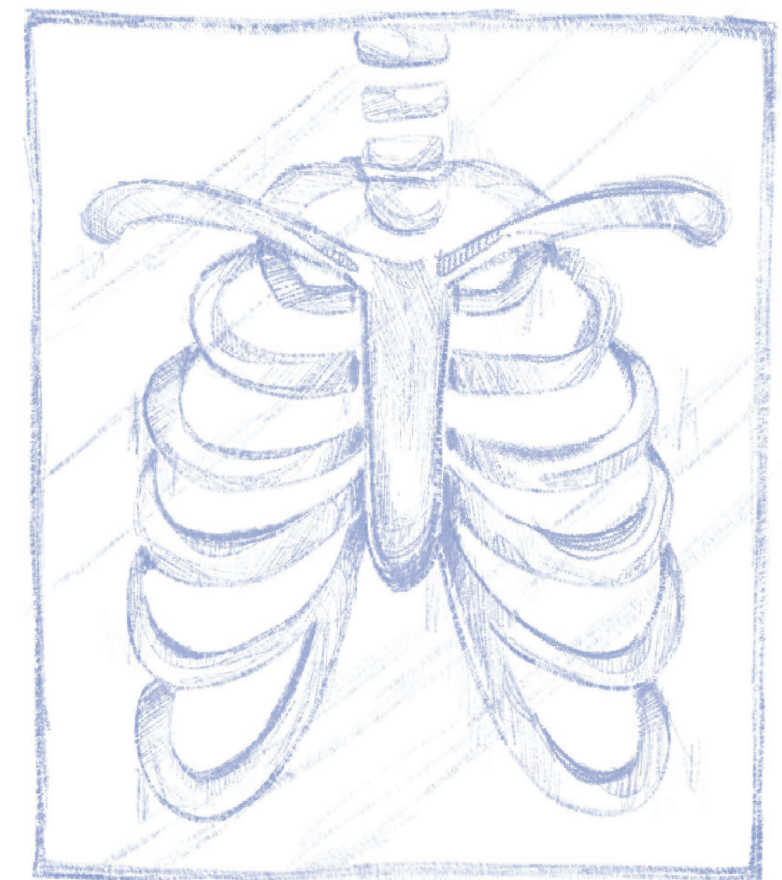
When athletes are sidelined and are faced by the anxiety of the loss of their sport this can also lead to immense physical effects. Grutzner knows this all too well, especially when athletes who cope with their injuries incorrectly worsen stress. For example, hesitant movements are a common barrier that student athletes face after an injury. The development of hesitant movements can stem from fear of failure and loss of confidence. Grutzner says, "I didn't experience any hesitant movements. But it was hard to get back into playing again."

The cycle between injury and mental health is unrelenting. Every setback feeds the anxiety that lingers, and that anxiety makes athletes more prone to re-injury. It is a pattern that keeps millions of athletes trapped in fear, causing some to retire early or face an onslaught of mental health struggles.

Even though injured at times, Grutzner's commitment to the sport does not waver. He has seen many professional athletes walk away because of injuries and fear of the unknown. But Grutzner attests to his approach in continuing to play a role in the game.

"I AM STILL YOUNG, [...] I DON'T WANT TO THROW AWAY MY POTENTIAL."

Even when injuries drag him down physically Grutzner attests to the importance of still showing up for teammates and motivating them on the field. Fully recovered Grutzner now plays for the Issaquah Lacrosse team and returned to the basketball court at Issaquah Middle last year. His resilience, once tested by injury, now fuels his drive to succeed on the field stronger than before.



THE REVOLVING DOOR

FRIEND: A PERSON WHOM ONE KNOWS AND WITH WHOM ONE HAS A BOND OF MUTUAL AFFECTION

FEAR: TO BE AFRAID OF (SOMEONE OR SOMETHING) AS LIKELY TO BE DANGEROUS, PAINFUL, OR THREATENING.

Story by: Quincy Nesbit

Illustrations by: Kelsi Lo

Fear of saying goodbye to friends, teachers, and the steady routine you have had since we were young is scary to do. With the class of 2026 approaching the end of high school, there is a sense of anticipation of meeting the future we had long looked forward to, while also bringing forth the looming fear of the unknown. Though it is exciting to look ahead, there is always a lingering fear deep down of losing friends, not getting into college, and the fear of not making your way into the real world.

I spend nights lying awake wondering about how our friendships after high school will be, or how we will stay connected with people we have known for years—a worry for many that could even overshadow the joys of senior year.

Deciding what I want from the future will always be overwhelming and stressful. It is at these times that I look back on these moments of connection with others and reminisce about the times spent together. When the day comes to don our graduation caps and gowns, following the promises to keep in touch, that fear remains of coming back home to a world that has progressed without you and the fear of being left behind alone.

To bridge the past and present, I decided to sit down with myself in freshman year and answer questions he might have had for me through an open telephone line. Traveling back in time I walk into my bedroom from that small apartment in California to see my freshman year Quincy laying in bed, looking at myself with a sort of pride that he will go somewhere in life wanting to tell him so much I pick up the phone to call him.

Phone Line Rings...

Senior Year: Hello? Is anyone there?

Freshman Year: Yep, it's Quincy. Who is this?

Senior Year: Oh wow it actually worked. It's your senior year self – crazy right? Okay, this is going to sound random but could you come up with questions for me? I am writing a piece about friendships in high school and how that has impacted us!

Freshman Year: Sure. Did we ever feel like we found a friend group where we fit into?

Senior Year: More thoughtful than I remember but I guess we were good at choosing questions. But we did, it just took us a while to figure it out, both in California and Washington. Once we did, it became comfortable, it felt peaceful fitting into a group after struggling to make friends for so long after moving to different high schools. With practice we ended up with a group of friends that made us feel like ourselves with days spent talking about anything and everything.

Freshman Year: Do we regret anything about how we handled losing people among the moves across states?

Senior Year: Yes, but I have learned that when you resent things you end up being cynical of the things around you and you end up struggling to do everyday things. For example, spending time with family and friends can end up feeling like a chore and not fun. This means being in your room more often than anything else, but the more you look at things in a positive light the less it seems like something you have to do but something you to do.

Freshman Year: Did we resolve old conflicts with friends after moving schools?

Senior Year: We ended up fixing old issues where there was confusion and drama between friends causing me to lose even more friends. I ended up mending these very relationships after understanding the misunderstanding. Now they are some of my closest friends!

Freshman Year: What did I want from a friend as a freshman?

Senior Year: I wanted to stay with a group of friends through an entire school year. Since I struggled to do this from years and years before where I was moving consistently to keep up with my family's work and lives. Through this I did learn though that I was able to quickly adapt to my surroundings and make friends easily.

Freshman Year: Do we feel proud of ourselves with how we handled our friendships from school to school?

Senior Year: I have gone through a lot—losing friends from bad conflicts and relationships, the awkward transition from a small school of 600 students to a big one with over 2,000 students, and dealing with the many mental health struggles that came along with the stress. On top of that, I lost the only stability my life had ever had, which was my home. Considering everything, I am honestly really proud of how I handled it all.

Freshman Year: What advice would you give me for the years ahead?

Senior Year: I would tell you that you should not be afraid to use your voice and speak your opinion. Find that balance in being yourself while also talking to friends and checking on everyone even if they seem fine. Even when things get hard, wait out for the storms ahead of you because you will get through it with the help of your friends and the people around you. Do not be afraid to branch out and explore your options, eventually the right people will find you.

Freshman Year: Did this help in any way?

Senior Year: Yeah. It did.

Phone Line Ends



Fear is thinking you will never get past something, but moving on means overcoming that fear. It is about learning from every mistake made in past decisions, continuing to make friends and new connections, and being open to the possibilities that await. Though losing friends is hard, we learn that this is a part of life. Your group will always be a revolving door. Yet throughout the interchangeable chapters you find the select few that stick with you for the rest of your life.

Story and Photos by:
Stella Handlin

STAY IN THE GAME:

The Uncertainty of Sports
Beyond High School



A rather repetitive life. A 6:20 alarm set on a phone rings out into the quiet morning before the sun rises and brings a new day. Hours spent under bright fluorescent school lighting, time slowly creeping by, with just the sound of a bell separating each class. Driving the same route home, taking the same turns without a thought. The driveway appears sooner than expected, but the keys remain in the ignition and the car door remains unopened. The choices made as a teenager start small and slightly dream-like such as potential colleges, major options and futures kept at a comfortable distance. It is fun to imagine a future, having control over what life could look like. But soon enough that eagerness fades away, and choices that began small and rather unimportant, in the blink, lose their hypothetical nature and rapidly morph into a soon to be reality. When it comes to the choice between quitting or continuing sports, it is the decision between parting ways with a comforting routine and exploring new beginnings or sticking with something familiar, but challenging in every aspect of life.

Growing up playing the same sport for years upon years creates a sort of dependent relationship; where identity, routine and stability become quietly intertwined. There is no checklist that qualifies playing in college and there is no clear process for mourning the sport that shaped childhood. I played nearly every sport in my

childhood. It was important to my parents that I explored every possible interest, in hopes that I would eventually find something that I loved and felt connected to.

By the age of eight, I quit every single sport I played; except soccer.

I started off playing in a recreational league, then made the jump to play club. It was a huge change for me as a player; the pace, the skill, everything was elevated. I stepped onto the field the day of tryouts, looking at girls who were able to do skills I had not even known existed. The girls flicked the ball up from the ground to their feet, alternating touches with both feet as they juggled to keep the ball in the air. Their touches were tight. The ball is fully in their body's control. Meanwhile, I flicked the ball up from the green grass to my hot pink cleat but the ball did not stay close; frustratingly it trickled away from me immediately. Each touch made the ball less stable and harder to control.

Despite this, I fell head over heels in love with the sport. My love for soccer became this pure and genuine thing. One that I worked for relentlessly and grew into as a complete player. I had poured my entirety into it, making changes, sacrifices, and fueling this drive to learn on a daily basis.

Today, I play for a highly regarded club which is known for its competitive environment.

I would be lying if I said that some days were not hard. I would be lying if I said that I never contemplated quitting. But oddly enough, that fast-paced change and struggle is what continually draws me back to the sport every single day.

I HAVE GROWN UP WITH SOCCER. NOT JUST PHYSICALLY, BUT EMOTIONALLY AND PERSONALLY AS WELL. IT IS PART OF MY IDENTITY.

Over the years, I have become smarter about the game, still, I have a lot of knowledge to gain and am often met with a multitude of complex opportunities to grow.

Soccer has always been by my side. It is my closest, most reliable friend. When my brain becomes a hurricane of thoughts filled with school, family, and world news.

Soccer is the land that cools the warm ocean fuel, weakening the storm.

When I envision what my near future looks like, without a doubt soccer is innately part of that image.

I do not question the role it plays in my life, even when things get hard. There is too much for me to explore, too much for me to learn. Quitting is simply not right personally. Each day I choose to stick with the trials and tribulations that come with the sport because of how highly I value it.

Although I currently play soccer because of my love for the sport and the opportunities it provides, that is not every student athlete's personal reason. The role sports can play in every person's life is a highly individual measure. For some, sports may be something they do less competitively to take up extra time they have. For others, it is a way to make friends and have a reliable group of people to be around consistently. Then there are people who truly love their sport but feel ready to explore new pathways and opportunities. Despite these differences, if people choose to quit their sport, they all have one thing in common; there is a void which their sport previously filled. That void is now looking for substance. Because



of this, the next steps are embarking on the journey to uncover and reshape their identity whilst all of the change occurs.

Senior Corinne Colemon spent a majority of her life doing competitive cheerleading for Connect Cheer Northwest. She recently decided to quit after she "struggled with mental health with cheer in general" but especially after "it started to get a little more serious in [her] last year doing it cause it started to affect [her] a lot physically with mental blocks". Despite this challenge she experienced, she had nothing but positive things to say about the overall journey. She noted the biggest thing she learned was "definitely leadership and advocating for herself". She also said "I was kind of forced into the position of like, leadership and it was probably one of the hardest things I've done because I'm not naturally a leader. But I feel I learned how to like, kind of use the anxiety I have to utilize it in a way that would help my teammates". Her reflection highlights the complexities of mourning a sport that added as much as it took away. With quitting a sport, the first change is the most impactful. Practices that once happened four days a week, now do not happen at all. The hours from 3:30-5:30 are no longer filled with interacting with teammates that feel more like sisters. Coleman's experiences demonstrate that mourning the sport does not require complete rejection of the sport as a whole. Instead, the most influential growth occurs when people are able to preserve what was learned during playing and then redefine the purpose of those skills after quitting.



On a different note, quitting a sport can come with huge opportunities. The opportunity to discover new interests, new desires and goals. Quitting a sport does not necessarily have to be 'bad'. Senior athlete Camdyn Gamble says, "Correlating to me, like not playing in college, I think I will feel happy with my decision just cause there's a lot of other

I'll be busy with." Like Gamble exemplifies, an opening in space and time in life does not have to always adopt a negative connotation. Although this change can be very emotional, the journey that follows is one that sets people up for success in the future. It is exciting to further develop who you are as a human being. It is healthy to learn to move on from things you love and to try new things, and it can grant people the tools needed to fill a void early on.

Allowing grief to coexist with gratitude is one of the most confusing yet rewarding processes that ensue quitting a long time sport. The pride in the skills that were gained, leadership, communication, discipline, work ethic and time management skills do not disappear when participation in the sport does. There is the common belief that when experiencing gratitude, that appreciation signals a complete closure, where sadness no longer remains. In reality, gratitude can deepen the grief process. Being grateful for what the sport provided on an interpersonal level, simply proves that the experience was impactful enough to become eternally meaningful. The best way to honor the role a sport played in life is by taking what



The "Tiger Seahawks", Stella's rec team she played on, pose for a picture post game.

you learned, and carrying it forward in every aspect of life. The time spent working on the craft does not become useless when quitting the sport. It only becomes useless if the skills you cultivated are not utilized.

It is important to note that at the end of the day, no decision is truly final. It is comforting to know that although such choices feel extremely important and irreversible, there are always the options to go back to something, to move farther away from it or to reinsert a healthy balance of it. It is inevitable that people are going to make 'wrong' choices, or change internally and want to realign with something.

Mourning is a sign of growth. A way to acknowledge that outgrowing something can be both necessary and painful. By stepping away and redefining what the sport means personally, rather than desperately clinging to the role it played, the space you created can be the way you honor its previous presence in your life and continue onward. Staying in the game looks different for every student athlete, even if it means moving on or continuing on a long journey and joy in sports.

GUIDE TO BECOMING A TRUE SEATTLITE

10 Things to do around the city of rain

By Riya Dasgupta

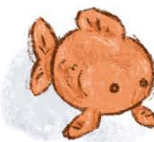


- ① PIKE PLACE MARKET (EARLY MORNING)
- ② GRAB A KIMCHI GRILLED CHEESE @ BEECHER'S
- ③ WATCH THE SUNSET AT GOLDEN GARDENS
- ④ SAY HI TO QUESO IN THE SEATTLE AQUARIUM
- ⑤ FIND A PAGE-TURNER IN THE SEATTLE CENTRAL LIBRARY
- ⑥ WAKE UP WITH A COFFEE FROM ANCHORHEAD
- ⑦ PICK UP A NEW ADVENTURE @ REI
- ⑧ WALK THE WATERFRONT AT ALKI BEACH
- ⑨ PARAGLIDE DOWN FROM POO-POO POINT
- ⑩ GRAB A BURGER-DICK'S DRIVE-IN

Being a student is hard. Between APs and activities, it's easy to forget how to take a break. Let this guide serve as a reminder that you deserve time to step away.

From outdoor adventures to classic city spots, lies here a mix of affordable and extravagant activities to enjoy.

Use this list as an alternative from 6 hours of doomscrolling, and relax from the stress filled life that comes from being a teenager with 10 items now on your Seattle bucket list.



MY JOURNEY BEING *MUSLIM*

Navigating Faith and Finding Strength in My Identity

Story and Photos by: Zainab Alvi

My story as a Muslim did not start with a single moment, it began with hundreds of tiny ones. The quiet afternoons when I would sit beside my family while praying, mimicking their movements even though I did not know all the prayers yet. The sleepy and cold mornings before sunrise, when my family gathered around the kitchen while it was still dark, starting our meal before our days fast for Ramadan. The times I would whisper a quick and silent prayer before a test, hoping my faith and effort would meet somewhere in the middle. Each one of these memories has shaped the person I am today, and the person I hope to become.

Being Muslim shaped my childhood in many different and unique ways. My earliest memories start with going to Sunday school.

Our long car rides to Redmond were filled with my family singing Yusuf Islam's (Cat Steven) songs. My classroom was on the second floor of the mosque, where the hallway hummed with fellow Muslims, laughing and talking. We began our lesson and ended by taking turns while reading the Quran. By the end, my stomach was always growling. As soon as it was lunch time, I would run down the stairs, to be the first in the lunch line.



Kindergartener Zainab Alvi with her classmates at Sunday school, taking a photo with the art piece her mama made.

“Chicken nuggets with fries please. Thank you so much,” I say politely. I ate slowly, savoring the softness of the chicken nuggets and fries, fueling myself for the last hour of Sunday school, focused on being a good Muslim and a good human being. After cleaning up, I would put my remaining change in the charity box. When class ended, I would rush to find my father, and at last, hugging him, eager to come back next Sunday.

“IN THE MOSQUE, MY IDENTITY FELT SAFE AND COMFORTING; OFTEN THOUGH OUTSIDE, IT FELT QUESTIONED.”

“Ma’am, I need you to come with me.” My family follows the security officer to the side. We are asked to remove our jackets and put our luggage down. We are questioned about the purpose of our trip, and our whereabouts, followed by an uncomfortable screening. Every single time we come back from Pakistan, this process would be repeated. I have always dreaded this experience and wondered, why us? Is it because of our faith? Do you think we are terrorists? We are U.S. citizens, yet we go through these unnecessary biased security checks, which are humiliating and stressful.

The feeling of being different did not just leave me when we left the airport, it followed me everywhere in quieter, and smaller ways. Trivial, it may seem but far from it.

There are many moments in my life where I have felt left out, but especially when people are consuming food containing pork or gelatin, which are not allowed in my religion. One of the many moments was when I was in the after-school club, at Clark elementary school. At snack time, a popular treat was Rice Krispy's. I could not have it, but everyone else I was sitting next to was tearing into

The marshmallow smell and texture were really overwhelming, and it made me feel really sad and lonely. Another moment was after a soccer game, someone brought a bunch of burritos to share. With no information on the ingredients, I had no choice but to leave the burrito. These might seem small to many, but these were my silent cries in the dark, alone and disconnected.

There were also moments of joy and celebrations. Eid brought me closer to others in the best way possible.

Eid has always felt like a big breath of fresh air after hard work, always beginning bright and early. I dress in my best clothes and matching jewelry, with my mama having painted my hands in Henna the night before.



At the mosque, thousands of people stand shoulder to shoulder, from diverse backgrounds, greeting each other with “Eid Mubarak!” and joyous smiles. Here I do not have to explain myself, nor do I feel alone. No Eid is complete without an Eidi (a special treat from your parents) - and my brother and I eagerly line up to get cash from our baba. This special day connects me to a welcoming community. Yet, as Eid ends, I realize the amount of schoolwork I must make up, because Eid is not a federal holiday. We always have to inform the attendance office, for the absence, and annoying repetition that leaves me feeling unheard and isolated.

My faith does not stop at the mosque or at home, it follows me everywhere, especially in school, sports, and gym. The school curriculum seems distant and disconnected many times - leaving out many influential Muslim voices. Sitting in the classroom, I notice a gap between what is being taught and what I have learnt at home.

At home, my family and I discuss many inspirational people, especially Muslims all around the world. Few of those include **Zheng He** (also known as Hajji Mahmud Shamsuddin), the great explorer in the 15th century, **Fatima al-Fihri**, the founder of the first university called Al-Qarawiyyin University, **Al-Zahrawi**, the father of modern surgery, **Mimar Sinan**, the chief architect for the Ottoman Sultans, and **Ibn Battuta**, the famous traveler in the 14th century. Yet at school, these names rarely appear or are mentioned.

This disconnect gets amplified during the month of Ramadan. It is a constant balance between answering all the curious and prying questions, while understanding the importance of fasting. I am usually the only person fasting and not eating at the lunch table. I am proud to fast as this month focuses on empathy towards the less privileged. It is not easy to fast here in the U.S., while in Pakistan and many other Muslim majority countries, during Ramadan, the schools and offices are only open for half a day, making it easier to fast.

Beyond just the lunch table, my faith also shapes how I participate in school activities and sports.

Modesty matters deeply in my religion—I always wear jogging pants, leggings, or tights underneath shorts. I always have to align with my soccer coaches and PE teachers, on my uniform changes. “Is it ok to wear pants underneath the shorts? I can’t just wear shorts.” Usually, they always approve, and some were even curious about my religion. While with a few others, my family and I had to have longer conversations to align. Sometimes, it is not about just my faith and permission, but about access and inclusion.

There is no proper place to do wudu, or ablution, before the prayers. Mostly, I have postponed my prayers until I get back home. Yet, despite these challenges, Islam remains a constant source of strength and connection in my life and beyond.

My story as a Muslim does not end here. Islam will continue to guide me in overcoming every challenge and shaping the person I hope to become.

MY NAME IS ZAINAB ALVI, AND THIS IS MY STORY.

CARRYING HOME WITH YOU

The Trials and Tribulations of Leaving and Starting Anew

Story by: Sarah Taimoory
Illustrations by: Kelsi Lo

Leaving is not just about the stuff; it is about the people. The ones who made you laugh until no sound came out, who knew your favorite drink order at your local cafe, who showed up when things got messy. Moving feels like being forced to tear a chapter out of a book you were not done reading. Never experience the main characters' endings. Even when there are promises to stay in touch, deep down you know things will change, and that the late-night calls will turn into missed ones. When the word of your parents' new job promotion gets out, the first instinct is to find out if the last days in school will count.

My neighborhood was never the nicest; it had a large lake full of geese that always seemed to be fierce and loud. I always avoided them even though the lake was right in front of my home's gates. From time to time, I was allowed outside to go to the park. Every day was a new adventure; I was always outside with kids my age, who seemed just as loud and crazy as I was. We would always have something to talk about, until now when emotional goodbyes begin.

It was two days before the move. Towers of boxes were stacked in my room mimicking a suburban city, and the smell of cardboard had overtaken the familiar scent of jasmine and grapefruit that used to linger in the halls. I was meant to finish the last of my packing, but instead, I made my way out of my house and to the lake. Where my other half played alongside the tiles; Natalie was the kind of friend who did not need a reason to



hang out, just a time and place. She showed up in her usual blue tidy oversized hoodie, the one with the faded band logo, and a bag of sour candy she knew I loved. We did not say much at first. Just sat on the slide at the park across from the lake, watching geese waddle around like they owned the place.

"I STILL THINK THEY ARE SECRETLY PLOTTING AGAINST US"

I joked, nudging her shoulder to clear the thick air. She laughed, tossing a sweet into her mouth, nearly missing. "They probably have a whole council meeting every morning! Agenda: terrorize the neighborhood kids." We stayed like that for a while, talking about everything and nothing. Conversation after conversation that looped around from school drama to what we would do if we were rich. Natalie would say that she would buy a house made of solid gold bars. I said I would open a house full of endangered species. Then she pulled out a folded piece of paper from her pocket. "I wrote you something," she said, suddenly shy. It was a letter. Not long, but full of Natalie's quirky inside jokes that were shared between us, DC superhero doodles and a list of things she swore I was meant to keep and not to become a forgotten memory. Like how we once used my mom's makeup secretly, or all the times we would run away from the geese that would chase us. At the bottom, she signed it off with the words 'Best friend!'

My tears stayed in place, not pouring down my cheek just yet.

I clung to her as tightly like the letter in my hand as if it was the most fragile thing in the world. We strolled around the lively lake, even then the geese were out in full force. Natalie taunted me, daring me to chase one, and I did for about three seconds before it turned around and chased me back. Our screams followed our loud and continuous footsteps; our laughs were so powerful that we forgot to breathe. When we finally collapsed on the grass, Natalie looked up at the dreamy and unforgettable blue sky and said, "You know, I always thought we would grow old here. Like, still hanging out at this park when we are eighty." I made eye contact. "Maybe we still will," I said. "Just with cooler stories." She smiled, but it was the kind of smile that knew things were changing. That this moment was already becoming a memory. Before we left, we carved our initials onto the wooden bench near the slide. It was not fancy for ten-year-olds, just two letters and a smiley face. But it felt like leaving a piece of us behind, a clear sign of our existence. We lived here. We mattered.

That night, I tucked her letter into my backpack, right between my favorite hoodie and the bag full of letters we passed to each other during class.

It felt like I was packing pieces of my heart. Because moving is not just about where you are going. It is about who you are talking with, even if it is just memories. It is the kind of memory that makes you smile when they come to your mind. It did not feel like I was packing to leave.

Moving away is not just about changing zip codes; it is about leaving behind the streets that knew your laughter, the friends who felt like family, and the memories that shaped you. Whether dreams are being chased, or running from the past, or simply turning the page. Every goodbye holds a story worth telling. Packing up your room feels weird, like a quiet cleanup after a sleepover. Taking pictures off the wall that still echoes the sound of laughter and late-night secrets from prior to the night just before. When you are packing up, you begin with easy stuff, clothes, books, and random junk. But then you hit the things that mean something. The notes your friends passed to you in class, the black hoodie with the print of a sunflower that was worn every Wednesday, and then the pink framed photo booth strips from the mall. You hold them for a second longer than you should, wondering if it is dumb to feel this attached. But it is not. They are proof that you lived here, that this place mattered.



MORE THAN JUST A TRIP:

How Travel Shaped My Beliefs About The World

Story and Photos by: Emma Wurster

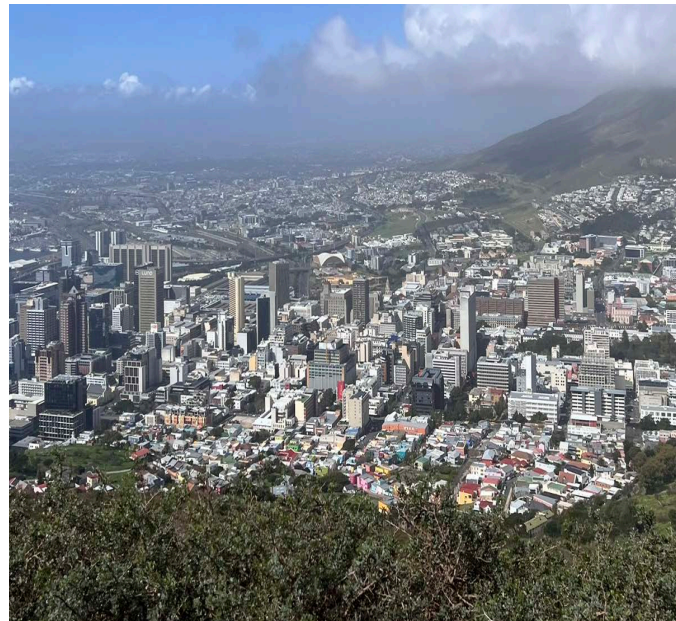
As I stepped out of the airport into the cool, rich air of South Africa, I was immediately hit by a wall of wind. I laughed, my loose hair spiraling around me, thrilled to be in this gorgeous country for a month of my summer vacation. I had no idea at the time that this trip would shift the way I saw the world and myself.

That summer I learned more about the culture of the native Zulu people, and their history. It shocked me that before that summer, I barely knew anything about native African tribes. Most of the information I learned in school had been found in highly biased sources from the 1600s. All of this made me wonder—why is bias so pervasive? If more people had gotten to experience the Zulu culture firsthand, surely their perspective would shift? It is a perspective shared by many and their experiences traveling. For example, freshman Deanna Huang commented on how her recent trip to Bali, Indonesia, affected her, saying “These connections exposed me to diverse cultures I never thought I would experience. It also gave me new perspectives on the way people live and how their daily life is very different [from mine]. Their culture made me admire the cultures around the world, and [showed me] how people’s beliefs and religion impact each individual differently.”

I have always wondered: people can learn about other cultures from textbooks or a school curriculum, but without actually experiencing them, can we ever truly understand each other? That is why to me, world travel goes beyond just

a vacation but a multifaceted experience that teaches us an important lesson. If we want to build a world where everyone is treated equally, we must first understand one another. By traveling and stepping into someone else’s world, we reach the first step of understanding.

As I looked out the car window at the stunning city below, nestled perfectly between the mountains and the sea, I felt a mix of awe and wonder. The grand mansions and the towering skyscrapers of Cape Town painted a picture of wealth and beauty. A perfect utopian city.



But as the car descended down the mountain, another side of the city began to reveal itself. Tiny, boxlike houses, so small I had missed them earlier, made up a large section of the city. Packed together, their haphazardly thrown together look stood at odds with the cleanly made mansions of the main city. A wave of sadness hit me as I took in the sight, the stark disparity between the wealthy and those who had so little. These ‘shanty towns’ scattered around the city, often lacked even the basic necessities such as clean water or proper sanitation.

Unfortunately, even in predominantly African countries such as South Africa, racism still lingers, a remnant of the longstanding legacy and apartheid that the country has historically endured. The majority of the ‘shanty town’ residents are native African people, while many of the more

affluent homes are owned by white people. According to the United Nations, “A 2022 World Bank report on inequality in southern Africa gave South Africa the unfortunate distinction of being the most unequal country in the world.” The report notes that,

“80 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY’S WEALTH WAS IN THE HANDS OF 10 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION. AND IT IS THE BLACK POPULATION WHO FACTOR THE MOST INTO THE POOREST CATEGORY [...]”

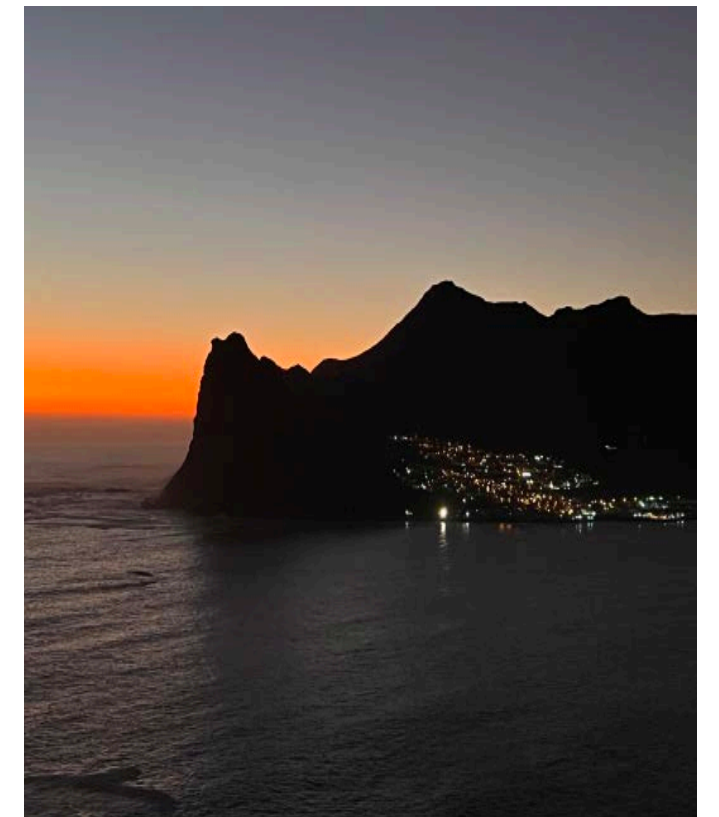
Despite the disparities many countries still face, travel can help make a difference. During my trip we went to visit local stores in the area. When people travel, they learn more about the history of a culture, race, and area. I marveled at the detailed wood carvings, balancing on a stick by a single point, and fitting together like a puzzle.



The small paper sign below denoted the charity the funds from sales here were supporting, to help people in need. As I checked out, a mix of joy and sadness stirred in me. I was glad to have helped, but there was a lingering weight of wishing I could do more. Thankfully, charities around the globe are working to make a difference, many of them fueled by the generosity of tourists like me. Many artists depend on those who stop and buy their work. By traveling to these countries, anyone can contribute and help make even a small difference. Doing this they educate themselves on the struggles that have shaped these countries and we begin to understand the full weight of the impact

discrimination have on a country. Armed with this awareness, we can take meaningful steps forward, working to create a world that is more inclusive and just for everyone.

Step-by-step, I climbed the narrow stairs into the plane, pausing at the top to take a glance one last time. Beyond the scorching tarmac, the city sprawled beneath the mountains. Its vibrant colors are still vivid in my mind. My mind wandered to the moments that stayed with me. The bustle of each city, so alike in some ways, yet each carrying its own rhythm and its own heartbeat. From the people we had met local families from a braai (a South African barbecue) we attended, and guides who taught us about life in South Africa and the rich culture it held; This trip shaped many parts of me, from my compassion to cultural understanding. I saw how inequality and discrimination carve deep divides and misconceptions in societies, but I also saw people working to change that. Travel had opened my eyes. It not just showed me the new places filled with deep connections but also the lives of the people who just like me had dreams and aspirations. It was clear to me now that travel, no matter the destination, is the first step towards a more compassionate world.



ONLINE EXCLUSIVES



THE TIKTOKIFICATION OF PSYCHOLOGY

The Rise of Aesthetics and Romanticization
By: Yasmina Fayzullaeva



THE SEARCH OF NEW BEGINNINGS

The Crossroads of Gap Years and College
By: Carlos Calderon



WHAT'S NEXT Q&A

Juggling Athletics and Academics
By: Katie Yin



RE-EVALUATION

Advice on Self-Image and Confidence
By: Lucas Guzman



MANAGING EDITOR'S NOTE



Dear Reader,

Lately I've been asking myself: What do I want to do with my life? This semester has been one of change and realization. For the first time, I've been redefining what I want my future to look like—what I want to do after high school, where I want to live, things I want to see, places I want to go. And while dreams of vanlife, the peace corps, being a park ranger, a ranch-hand, an environmental scientist, and a legislative aid are all incredibly exciting, this process was also extremely disheartening. I watched so many around me settle into clear plans and went from feeling certain of my direction, to back at square one in my junior year.

This uncertainty was incredibly isolating. I felt behind and frustrated with myself for not knowing what comes next. It took a lot of time to understand that this “lost” feeling is not unique to me, but a foundational teenage experience. So many of us are trying to make sense of who we are, discover our interests, while learning how to sit with not knowing. It brought me comfort in realizing that this experience is shared. Unsure of what my next steps were, I leaned into the things I love. I picked up new hobbies, spent so much time outdoors, and went on countless adventures.

These experiences brought me clarity, and I started to make sense of the things that made me happy. I found peace, adventure, and the people I love most through the universal human experience of not knowing your next steps. As an editor, I have had the privilege of watching our writers be vulnerable, put themselves on the page, and explore what matters to them. Seeing how they reflect, experiment, and grow has been an incredible gift, and it reminded me that the journey of figuring things out is a shared one.

I hope you enjoyed our finished product. Here's to figuring life out.

elise pelgum

MANAGING EDITOR

STAFF



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Zinna Park

MANAGING EDITOR

Elise Pelgrum

LAYOUT DESIGNER

Rares Rus

SOCIAL MEDIA

Kate Bevins

WRITERS

Zainab Alvi | Artem Babayan | Kate Bevins | Carlos Calderon | Cameron Day | Yasmina Fayzullaeva | Lucas Guzman | Stella Handlin | Jayden Luse | Quincy Nesbit | Sarah Taimoory | Emma Wurster | Katie Yin

ILLUSTRATORS

Riya Dasgupta
Kelsi Lo

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Neko Vayle

EDITORIAL MENTOR

Ava Wine

ADVISOR

Jordan Pirotto

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

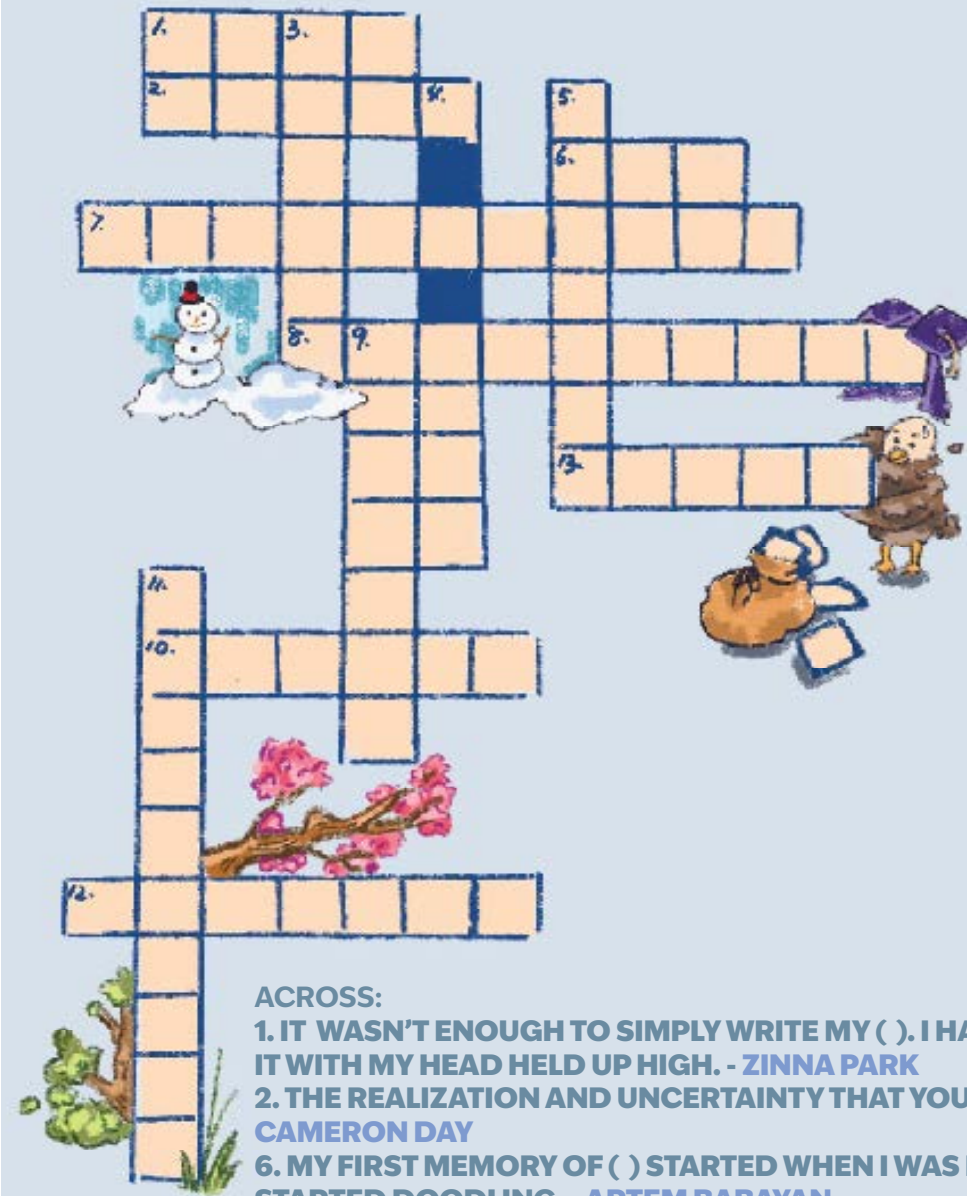


ISSAQUAH
SCHOOLS
FOUNDATION

WE WANT TO TAKE THE TIME TO THANK AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE ISSAQUAH SCHOOLS FOUNDATION, IHS PTSA, AND ISSAQUAH ASB FOR MAKING THIS PROJECT POSSIBLE. WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT WE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PULL THIS OFF AND WE SINCERELY EXTEND OUR GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION.

CROSSWORD

Created by: Kelsi Lo



DOWN :

3. () FEELS LIKE BEING FORCED TO TEAR A CHAPTER OUT OF A BOOK YOU WERE NOT DONE READING. - SARAH TAIMOORY
4. THAT IS WHY TO ME, WORLD TRAVEL GOES BEYOND JUST A VACATION BUT A MULTIFACETED EXPERIENCE THAT TEACHES US AN IMPORTANT LESSON. - EMMA WURSTER
5. I RECONNECT WITH () WHILE BREATHING IN THE CRISP WASHINGTON AIR. ONE OF MY FAVORITE TRAILS TO EXPERIENCE IS SNOW LAKE. - KATIE YIN
9. WHETHER IT IS NOTICED IN A VICTORY OR IF IT GOES UNNOTICED AND ENDS WITH A WRECKED (), THE HOURS SPENT WORKING ON THE CAR IS RARELY SEEN. - JAYDEN LUSE
11. TIKTOK AND OTHER PLATFORMS SUCH AS TUMBLR, INSTAGRAM AND FACEBOOK ARE NOTORIOUS FOR MISINFORMATION ON ANY TOPIC, AND () AND MENTAL HEALTH ARE NO EXCEPTIONS. - YASMINA FAYZULLAEVA

ACROSS:

1. IT WASN'T ENOUGH TO SIMPLY WRITE MY (). I HAD TO LIVE IT, STRENGTHEN IT, AND CARRY IT WITH MY HEAD HELD UP HIGH. - ZINNA PARK
2. THE REALIZATION AND UNCERTAINTY THAT YOU MIGHT NEVER PLAY YOUR () AGAIN. - CAMERON DAY
6. MY FIRST MEMORY OF () STARTED WHEN I WAS IN KINDERGARTEN, THAT IS WHERE I FIRST STARTED DOODLING. - ARTEM BABAYAN
7. "() IS ACTUALLY REDUCING DIVERSITY ... THE FOREIGN STUDENTS' POPULATION IS MOSTLY CHINESE OR INDIAN." SAID JON FEERE, THE CURRENT ICE CHIEF OF STAFF, MY INTERVIEWEE. - KELSI LO
8. WHEN THE DAY COMES TO DON OUR () CAPS AND GOWNS, FOLLOWING THE PROMISES TO KEEP IN TOUCH, THAT FEAR REMAINS OF COMING BACK HOME TO A WORLD THAT HAS PROGRESSED WITHOUT YOU AND THE FEAR OF BEING LEFT BEHIND ALONE. - QUINCY NESBIT
10. THE JOY, THE STRUGGLE, AND GROWTH IN THE DISCOVERY OF OURSELVES THAT WE FIND () IN. - THE SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE 25-26 EDITORIAL BOARD
12. THE CHOICES MADE AS A TEENAGER START SMALL AND SLIGHTLY DREAM-LIKE SUCH AS POTENTIAL ()S, MAJOR OPTIONS AND FUTURES KEPT AT A COMFORTABLE DISTANCE. - STELLA HANDLIN
13. IT FLOWS WITH A RICH, LENGTHY HISTORY, AND ITS ENTRANCING SILENCE CAN OFTEN ONLY BE INTERRUPTED BY THE CALL OF AN () OR THE SOUND OF CRASHING WAVES - KATE BEVINS.

ISSAQUAH 2025-2026