

FALL 2024

# THIS WE BELIEVE

ESSAYS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

MR. ALLEN'S ENGLISH I CLASS



# PREFACE

## EDWARD ALLEN, TST UPPER SCHOOL ENGLISH

There is something special about seeing one's writing in print. There is, I believe, a satisfaction, a joy in composing something important enough to write about, then polishing the piece, and finally freeing it to the printed page for others to read.

I have told my writing students through the years that once something they have written is published, that piece, in a sense, is no longer theirs. The piece now belongs to its reader, who is free to interpret it, visualize it, and even in his own mind, change it into whatever meaning he pleases. And that whole process is a joyous one, one that I am determined my students get to experience each school year.

The above is the motivation behind our Trinity School of Texas annual publication project, a project that allows every Upper School student to originate a piece of writing, run it through an extensive revision and peer editing process and then emerge with what is a polished piece of writing to share in a publication.

Some of the pieces in this booklet will be chosen by TST freshmen, sophomores, and juniors as the subject of an analysis essay, one of the three essays students are required to write from scratch on the College Board's rigorous Advanced Placement Language and Composition Exam given each May to juniors. Similarly, among the three essays that seniors compose on the AP English Literature and Composition exam is a poetry analysis. My feeling is that students are more motivated to compose a quality analysis over a peer's writing as a part of their analysis training than to compose such a writing based upon some random essay or poem furnished by the College Board. In fact, this very concept former TST Headmaster Gary Whitwell and I presented at the College Board AP 2018 National Convention in Houston.

For this 2024-2025 school year, the freshmen composed personal philosophies in their THIS WE BELIEVE booklet, a collection inspired by the NPR program and the companion THIS I BELIEVE book, which was the freshmen summer reading assignment. The sophomores recounted personal experiences which impacted their value systems in their STORIES OF SIGNIFICANCE booklet. Mindful that the juniors will have to respond to a given piece on their AP Exam in May, I asked them to select a memorable quote from [goodreads.com/quotes](https://www.goodreads.com/quotes) and respond to their chosen quote for their TST QUOTABLES booklet entry. Finally, the seniors were asked to reflect upon their academic career leading up to their senior year and to define their goals, hopes and/or dreams for the future in their REFLECTIONS booklet.

This project recognizes what is often the most overlooked step of the writing process--the publishing step. Students rarely see their own writing as well as the polished writing of their peers in print. This project affords our students just such an opportunity—and you are the beneficiary! Enjoy!



# DEDICATION

This collection of student writing is dedicated to Courtney Stern, TST Registrar and Administrative Assistant to the Head of School.

Courtney completed the layout of this year's student editions of *This We Believe*, *Stories of Significance*, *TST Quotables* and *Reflections*; students directly submitted their original writings to Courtney. Courtney also arranged for all the photos to accompany each publication, a mammoth job within itself.

Since her arrival, Courtney has established an inviting yet professional atmosphere to the TST front office. In her time here, she has developed a reputation for her kindness, her attentiveness to the needs of the staff and her dependability. We at TST are truly grateful to have Courtney on our TST staff.

Courtney's tireless work to see this publication project to fruition is so appreciated! Thank you, Courtney, for making possible this year's student publications!





Carson Cummins is 15 years old and lives in Kilgore. He wants to be a professional singer. He lives with his mom and dad and his brothers

# TRUE LOVE

*Carson Cummins*

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I believe in true love! Ever since I was a young boy, I have always believed that true love is special and provides meaningful relationships. For the past couple of years, all I can think about is how I'm going to find the meaning of true love. I believe in love at first sight. I believe in a friendship that turns to love. I believe in love for my family. I believe in my love for God. I believe true love is real! In fact, my favorite Bible verse is 1 Corinthians 13:8: "Love never fails."

There are multiple forms of love. In my life experiences, I have found love for friends, family, and God. These forms of love can produce a lot of different feelings. You may feel joy, excitement, pain, hope, or even protection. Love is a feeling of deep affection for someone or something. You can fall in love or you may fall out of love. Love can be very confusing.

In middle school, I met a girl. But as time went on, things started to change. She ended up being really boring and never talked. I guess I can say now she was not the one for me. The next year, I had another girlfriend. However, it turns out that she was pretty toxic, so

that was the end of that. So I keep moving forward, hoping one day I'll find the one for me.

Next, I met a girl on a cruise who was very pretty. When my friends and I were talking, she came over and asked if she could hang out with me. When I saw her, it was like I was waking up on Christmas morning. She was the most beautiful and gorgeous sight I have ever seen! While I was on the cruise, I hung out with her for the rest of our trip. But once the cruise ended, we had a great time, but unfortunately, we had to go back home. Although we were great friends, it was not true love.

I have started a new school, Trinity School of Texas. So far, I can say I have had the most fun I have had in a long time. As for now, I'm just enjoying life and meeting new friends. TST has been an amazing new start! I'm just living life and enjoying it to the fullest! I believe in true love, and I know it exists! I love Trinity.

I truly love my family. My family loves me without a doubt. They support me, provide for me, and they are there when I need them. As long as I can remember, my family has supported me emotionally and without fail. This is true love.

My love of God is above all else. Helen Keller said, "The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart." My faith tells me that God is always with me, no matter what I am going through or doing. I haven't seen God, but I know He is always with me. God will always be true love to me.

# I BELIEVE IN HAVING A POSITIVE MINDSET

*Connor Cummins*

I believe in having a positive mindset. Have you ever heard of the saying, “Mind over matter?” Well, it is a proven fact that if you think positively, your day will be positive. When I wake up in the morning, I have made it a habit to look in the mirror and remind myself that I will have a good day. It starts my morning off with a good attitude, no matter what obstacles I may face.

Whenever I feel like I’m stuck on something negative, I can’t get out of my thoughts, I just start to think of the positives in my life, such as a great family, awesome friends, great teachers and more. I always try to see a “bright outlook” in everything I do. Thinking positively can help let go of fear that most likely will not happen.

I used to get so nervous when I had a track meet. I had lost my confidence, thinking I was not as good as the other runners. My brother Carson was there to help lift me up and let me know my strengths as a runner and told me to stop worrying. I started to think positive and believe in myself again for the rest of my track meets. When I put my mind to it, I knew I would get in the top five places at

the end of each race I ran that year, and I accomplished that goal I set. When I stepped on the line, I said to myself, “I am as good as anyone else running.” In any sport you choose to play, you must always believe you’re going to win. Believing in yourself is the first obstacle you face. Be positive!

I have dealt with anxiety in some situations that were out of my control. This caused me to sometimes worry and overthink about things so much that I would feel sick. At times I felt I had no friends and nothing was going how I wanted. I sometimes would stop playing sports and not hang out with my friends. I spent a lot of time in my room. However, I chose to start thinking of the positives I have in my life. I thought of the friends who call me and hang out with me! I realized I had friends all along and I could not let one setback bring me down. I have a positive mindset and tell myself I’m a good person and have lots of great friends! I control my thoughts and choose to look at the glass half full and not half empty.

In the world we live in today there are many things that we could dwell on and be upset about. I choose to look at the beauty and happiness and try to turn a negative into a positive thought.

I also try to encourage other people to think positively about their lives. Attitude is everything! When you focus on the good in situations, you are more likely to stay positive and find ways to solve problems you face in life. A positive attitude can also improve your overall health. Staying positive can help get rid of stress and help you enjoy life! A positive attitude is contagious and lifts up those around you. When I think positively, I think of what will go right for me. I do not want to focus on what could possibly go wrong.

I discovered that I wanted to be a cruise director when I went on my first cruise. I saw so many people having fun, laughing and enjoying themselves. I know I have the mindset to make others’ vacations the best they can be and make sure my positivity flows over into making their cruises amazing.

When I moved to Trinity School of Texas, I came here with a positive mindset and hopeful attitude. It has been one of the best decisions I have ever made in my life! The teachers are positive with great attitudes and the students are kind. I know this helps me be excited about school everyday.

Life is like a storybook that has many chapters and how you spend it will make you who you are everyday and in your future. I choose to have a positive mindset because I want my journey in life to be filled with positive thoughts and a positive mindset!



Connor Cummins is a 15-year-old in the freshman class at Trinity School of Texas. He enjoys playing golf and tennis and has a passion for traveling and meeting new people. He likes to inspire people to have a positive mindset.



Elizabeth Drever is starting 9th grade. She loves to play volleyball and loves to hang out with friends. She wants to attend The University of Texas for college and would like to work in the medical field.

# I BELIEVE IN FEAR

*Elizabeth Drever*

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I believe in fear.

We have all experienced fear. Fear has always made me feel uncomfortable and scared to do things I love. However, I would like to start a new beginning by facing my fears, and learning how doing so holds a great value in my development. Fear is an emotion that is used to alert you in situations, but I would like to list the good qualities of fear and how I would like to use fear to my advantage.

Facing fear can lead to many positive things in life, like personal growth. Personal growth will give me a very positive and secure sense of achievement. Overcoming obstacles can boost things like self-esteem or confidence. These factors are very important in life and will help me move on to bigger and greater things.

Experiencing fear will help my maturity in dealing with emotions. This means I will learn how to manage my feelings and learn better and more positive ways to express them. Sometimes people make stupid mistakes and decisions because of fear, and moving on by

learning how to push those feelings in the right direction will boost one's emotional development.

Exploring fear will motivate me and will teach me how to set goals in life. Getting over fear will encourage me to take risks by pushing me outside my comfort zone. Sometimes you need to scare people to motivate them to do the right thing that will benefit them and others around them.

In conclusion, fear should never be something that you run away from. I need to learn always to face my fears to develop and conquer obstacles in life. Fear can be healthy, and as I grow older, I should continue to learn the beauty of fear instead of fleeing from it.

I believe in fear.

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*“Fear can be healthy.”*

# FORGING YOUR BELIEFS

*Cole Hatchett*

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I believe people should develop their beliefs and I believe this through personal experiences rather than relying on the things that other people believe in. Some people's choices in life (as well as their mistakes) form what they believe, and using those beliefs may not be the best choice for you.

Though many people believe in God, not all families attend church every Sunday. My family doesn't attend church every Sunday, but that doesn't mean we don't love God any less or have a lesser relationship with God than the people who attend church every Sunday. Some weekly church attenders believe that to be devoted to God is to attend church every Sunday. I believe being devoted to God means you love God and display God-like characteristics by showing kindness to others, being helpful, volunteering in the community, and attending church when it is the most convenient for you and your family.

I am the youngest in my family, so compared to my sister, I get treated differently. For example, my parents were more hesitant to

let my sister go out on her own, like going to the mall or the movies by herself. However, they are more relaxed with letting me go by myself at an earlier age since they know things turned out ok with my sister.

I believe my parents are fair to me but not pushovers and they are strict with me when needed. My parents may seem much more harsh and strict with my sister because of her being older and them having different expectations of her.

Though using other people's beliefs to form our beliefs can be useful (like how our parents teach us to be nice to our friends and to respect other people), there are other means of influencing people's beliefs such as using propaganda, writing misleading articles about certain events or people or the news stations exaggerating stories. I believe people should check their sources from where they receive their information as well as to not try to get information from people with biases as they may negatively affect your views.

The ideas I have stated above are my beliefs now as a fifteen-year-old as a result of the experiences I have had in my life so far. Maybe as I grow older, I will experience new things which may or may not change my beliefs, and maybe my friends and my family's beliefs will change as time goes on, but I won't let them affect me, and I plan to stay true to my core beliefs.

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Cole Hatchett is fifteen years old and has lived in Longview his whole life, and he has attended Trinity School of Texas for the last 13 years. He often goes to Crested Butte during the summer. He considers Crested Butte to be his home away from home; it is where he learned to ride a bike and where he first went whitewater rafting, supping, and snow skiing.



Hudson Heath is a 9th grade student at Trinity School of Texas. He is involved with many extra-curricular activities such as football, basketball, and track. He has aspirations of continuing his love for basketball into college.

# THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING

*Hudson Heath*

I believe in the power of positive thinking. I think this should be taught and encouraged at an early

age. Positive thinking is your mental attitude that expects good things. This type of thinking can include practicing gratitude, surrounding yourself with positive people, positive

self-talk, doing good deeds for others, and refraining from negative thoughts.

I have a major passion for the game of basketball. I had to teach myself the sport and practice every day. I eventually came to realize that the hardest thing to do is to keep a positive mindset. When you miss a free throw or lose a game, you have to learn how to control your emotions or this can impact the way you play in the next game. Thinking positive helps me so much. This is just as important as the training and practice that is put into the game. I hear about people who have a passion just as big as mine who stop playing the sport because of negative thinking which causes self-doubt and leads them into a downward spiral. The ones who have made it to the college level and then on to the NBA understand how crucial the mental aspect is to the game and have been able to use different strategies to help them in this area.

Positive thinking is something that I have taught myself and practiced over time. This not only applies to sports, but also to life as well. One thing I have found to be helpful is surrounding myself with other positive people. You want to be with people who lift you up since we tend to be the hardest on ourselves and be our own worst critics. If you notice that when you are around a person who is in a bad mood, negativity starts to bring you down as well.

Practicing positive self-talk is another strategy to help with positive thinking. For example, if you did not score well on a test, do not say, "I really bombed that

test. Instead say, "I am going to study differently for the next test and ace it." Start your day with positive affirmations. These are positive statements you can repeat to yourself to boost your mood and give you confidence. An example of this is telling yourself that you are confident and successful enough. This will help set the tone for the day.

Also, practicing regularly something as small as keeping a journal and writing down things you are grateful for each day. You might write down three to five things you are grateful for. This can be anything from being grateful you get to live another day to being grateful that you have breakfast on the table.

Doing good deeds for others is another way to have a positive mindset. I always try to do at least one good deed a week. This can be saying something nice to someone. I have donated my basketball shoes and football cleats to kids in need.

As you can see, these are just a few of the ways I practice positivity. There are so many other strategies out there that can help with thinking positively. I use these in all the sports I play and in my everyday life.

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*"Positive thinking is something that I have taught myself and practiced over time."*



# SPORTS BUILD CHARACTER

*Cooper Ivy*

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I believe in many things in life, but there is one thing that I definitely believe in. I believe participation in sports builds character, and I believe sports make you a better person.

What sports have brought into my life is truly incredible. Sports completely changed me as a person as well as changed how I view life. One thing that I really have to make sure I have in sports is discipline. While playing sports, you have to be disciplined to know when to do something or even if you should do it. For example, if you are about to run into the end zone for a touchdown, but the score is tied and there isn't a lot of time on the clock, you could waste some of the time on the clock and then score. This makes sure that the other team does not have a lot of time to score. Mental discipline is essential.

Sports have brought a lot more into my life other than discipline, like friendship. Whenever I play football or basketball, I always try to have good friendships with my teammates and even with some of the players on the other team. I do not like to make people mad at me whenever

all we are doing is playing a sport for fun, even if it is competitive. Whenever you become really good friends with all of your teammates, it will also be easier for you to make friends outside of sports. It is good to have friends with people because if they have your back in sports, they will definitely have your back outside of sports. Friendships will make you a better person and make people enjoy being around you.

The last thing I want to acknowledge that sports have brought into my life is good sportsmanship. Whenever I play a sport, I always try to have a positive attitude and be kind to others, just like I try to do outside of sports. This has really helped me become a better person and not let my emotions get the best of me, whether I'm playing football, basketball, or even golf. Good sportsmanship will build your character a lot as a person and show people who you really are. People like to hang out or hang around people who are nice and respectful, not someone who is rude and thinks they are better than everyone else. I think that having good sportsmanship is the most important thing you could have in a sport, and if you want to go to college, know that colleges don't only look at your skill, but they also really like to see who you are as a person. Having good sportsmanship is the best thing you could have as an athlete and a person. Sports are very important and can really make a difference in your life.



Cooper Ivy is a 14-year-old freshman born and raised in Longview, Texas. He loves playing football, basketball, and golf, and he would like to attend the University of Texas to study engineering.



Brooklyn Jones, raised in Longview, Texas, attends Trinity School of Texas. She has played basketball for four years now on three different teams. Brooklyn hopes to study health-related professions at TCU.

# I BELIEVE IN TAKING RISKS FOR GOD

*Brooklyn Jones*

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It was a normal Thursday on the way back from a basketball game. I was in the car talking to my dad when we passed an older lady walking on the roadside carrying groceries. Normally this wouldn't phase me, but I felt the need to talk to this woman or help her somehow; unfortunately, I couldn't bring myself to say anything. We continued driving, and I stayed silent. The farther we drove, the more guilty I felt. I tried not to think about her telling myself, "She's probably long gone now" or "Even if she is still there, she's going to think you're crazy." I kept repeating these things in my head until finally I looked at my dad and said, "We need to turn around." My dad looked at me confused and said, "Did you forget something in Carthage? They're closed by now." I immediately turned to him and said, "No, the woman; we need to turn around." Still confused without any question, he turned the truck around and headed back the way we came. As we turned onto the street, I saw her again carrying the same grocery bags and told my dad to pull over. I started walking towards the woman, thinking to myself, "What are you doing, BK?" but before I could process what was happening, I was standing right in

front of her saying, "Can I pray for you?" Still to this day, I have no idea what I said in those few moments of prayer, but soon after it was over, she was crying in my arms, telling me her sister was battling severe lung cancer and that she was so lost. In that moment, God used me as a vessel for that woman. I invited her to our church soon after, and she has been coming for over a year.

This encounter is a prime example of stepping out of your comfort zone and taking risks for God. If I hadn't pulled over to talk to that lady, she might have never had the opportunity to join a church family and grow in her faith. Taking risks for God isn't always a big task - it can be as small as opening a door for a stranger or as big as having a serious talk with someone you're not very comfortable with.

Over the years I've passed up many perfect opportunities to share the word with people just solely based on fear of rejection, but as I've started to follow his instructions for me, I've realized that the biggest risk you can take is to take none and miss an opening. Which is why I believe in taking risks for God.

# ALWAYS SEARCH FOR THE GOOD

*Luke Jones*

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I believe people always need to find the good in others. There are 8 billion people in this world. My guess is that there is not one person who has not made a mistake, said something that he regrets, or done something wrong. Unfortunately, I think that once someone has made those mistakes or said words that can't be taken back, a lot of people have a hard time looking past those actions to find the goodness that the person has to offer. Everyone has goodness in his heart to offer in this world.

I was in Houston, Texas, hanging out with my friend with whom I grew up since birth. He is smart, funny, and overall just a good friend to me. He and his little brother do not get along very well (typical sibling rivalry) and are arguing or fighting more often than not. To be honest, it can get very annoying when I'm around them as they continue to bicker, argue, and nag each other constantly. One particular day, I was in the backyard with them and once again, they

were not getting along. I thought to myself, "Are they always going to fight like this? Do they truly hate each other?" After a while, I had enough of the arguing so I walked back inside, neither one of them noticing my absence, each caught up in the petty argument of the moment. The next day, the three of us were hanging out in the movie room, and I couldn't believe what I was seeing and hearing. They were not only just getting along, but it seemed like they were truly enjoying each other's company. They were nice to each other, they were peaceful, they were listening to one another speak, and they were showing gentleness and compassion for one another. I saw the goodness in them. I finally witnessed their tender side for one another and felt assured that they love each other deeply.

This moment really changed the way I see people today. I realize that everyone has bad days. Everyone says things that he might not mean in a weak moment of frustration or anger. Everyone is capable of making poor decisions but each of these

mistakes or moments of weakness do not define the person. A person can have the worst criminal record in history and still have some goodness in his heart. There are many good qualities that a person can have: kindness, compassion, joy, love, generosity, and patience, just to name a few. There are many ways to express goodness.

Humans are far from perfect but each one of us has goodness to offer. If people look deep enough, they might just make the world a more joyful place or better yet, find their own joy by finding that goodness in those around them.

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*"Humans are far from perfect but each one of us has goodness to offer."*



Luke Jones was born in Houston, Texas, in 2009. He is currently living in Longview, Texas, with his mom, dad, and three-year-old brother George. He is a freshman at Trinity School of Texas. Luke enjoys playing basketball and loves cars. If Luke doesn't make it to the NBA, then he plans to study medicine. He is about to get his driver's license soon and is looking forward to driving.



Grayson King was born in Longview, Texas, and is a 9th grade student at Trinity School of Texas and plays a lot of sports such as basketball, football, and track. He would love to attend the University of Texas at Austin and would like to continue to play basketball in the future.

# WHAT I BELIEVE

*Grayson King*

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Leaves are falling, daylight is lessened and football season just ended. It's basketball season. I believe that having a passion for

something that involves so much teamwork, physical activity and quick decision making has made me more confident that I once was a seven-year-old boy.

My mom put me in a variety of sports growing up. She wanted to make sure I was active. It is funny that she never pushed basketball because that was her favorite sport. At seven years old, I had just started a new school. I was on a "real" team at school. Game day was here and someone finally passed me the ball. I took off running straight toward the basket and finally realized I was not being cheered for, but I was being yelled at! Oops! I was heading toward the opponent's basket.

The game of basketball has helped me throughout my entire life. When I step on the court, it feels as if everything just goes away; it's just me and the ball. I've always been the smallest player on the team, but that has not stopped me from being one of the most aggressive and competitive players on the court. A lot of people say I'm really cocky, and I don't take shame in that, either. I believe a key way to beat your opponents is to beat them mentally first; in other words, you could say I like to get inside my opponent's head. I learned this from a guy named Patrick Beverly, a point guard for the Milwaukee Bucks. He is also one of the smallest guys on the court but also one of the most confident. I really try to model my mental approach to the game after him.

Basketball has changed my entire outlook on life. I've never felt more passion for something than the sport of basketball. Kyrie Irving once said, "Basketball is the

most reliable thing in the world; you bounce and it comes right back up to you." I wish basketball could have stayed the same throughout my life, but unfortunately, the game has changed. I used to play for fun, but now I'm playing because I want a future in the game I love. I'm fighting for a scholarship with a boy I don't even know. Millions of players would like a spot on a college team, but so would I. I am trying to make my dreams a reality. I don't care if it's D1, D2, D3, or even Ju-co. I just want to continue playing.

This year will be my first year of high school basketball. I'm really hoping I can make a difference in what the team does this year. High school basketball is the start of my journey. I have to put in so much effort and work if I want to play at a higher level. Tim Notke once said, "Hard work beats talent if talent doesn't work hard." This quote has made me realize that not everything is just going to be handed to you; you have to work for it. This is why I believe that the sport of basketball has changed my life.

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*"Basketball has changed my entire outlook on life."*

# CONFIDENCE IS KEY

*John Clark McHaney*

I believe that confidence is the best way to succeed in anything whether it be basketball, video games, or even school.

For as long as I can remember, I loved picking up new sports and giving them a try because of my older brother Boone. In the past few months, I have recently picked up the game of golf.

Once I started playing golf, I would go out to Pinecrest Country Club every day I could and practice all day. Practicing all the time led me to like this quote by Arnold Palmer: "Success in this game depends less on strength of body than the strength of mind and character."

As a person who plays golf, I believe if you are not willing to put the necessary work required, then you will never make it to the next level. You can't just go outside and say, "I don't think I will play today." That behavior just shows that you don't care enough about going on and pursuing a sport you love as your job.

I feel lucky to be around Hunter Heath, an accomplished golfer. Every time I see Hunter out at Pinecrest, he is always out with his friends or playing in the Thursday Scramble. Seeing someone around me who is just as determined as

he is helps me feel confident and makes me believe if I keep trying, I can make it further in golf than I ever thought possible. Hunter has also helped me in my golf game; every weekend we make time to go out and play 9 or 18 holes, and he coaches me on how I can improve my swing.

But for all the hard work someone puts into a sport, sometimes he will fall short or he will run into an obstacle in his career that he doesn't think he can overcome. That is why confidence is key. I believe confidence is something that leads a person to believe that he can succeed. Succeeding while using confidence feels amazing. It makes you feel like you're on top of the world because you accomplished something you never thought you could do.

Being confident is the best thing I can do for myself while playing any sport because if I'm not confident, then I won't play as well as I normally could because I wouldn't believe that I could be successful, so that is why I stay confident while I play a sport.

In conclusion, having confidence is the best thing you can do for yourself while playing sports or taking a test because you do your best and though it won't always turn out the way you want it to, you should just know if you stay confident, you can do just about anything.



John Clark McHaney is living in Longview, Texas, and plans on pursuing his golf career and taking his golf game to the next level at Auburn University.



Matthew McHaney is 15 years old and goes to Trinity School of Texas and loves to play golf and tennis. He hopes to go to college and study architectural science.

## NEW LIFE

*Matthew McHaney*

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There are so many things that you can believe in like Bigfoot, aliens, or ghosts, but I believe in new life.

There are so many ways to bring new life into something or someone who is gone but there are always ways of remembering them like having pictures or remembering things that they loved. The reason I am writing this is because my family's bay house burned down on Easter and our house was very special to our family. So when it burned down, we were devastated. But we are remembering it is by rebuilding in the exact same spot. When the fire went out, the firefighters went in and grabbed photos from inside we will be able to display in the new house. Also, we are doing things inside the new house that were also in the old one, so we can add a bit of the old house into the new one.

In October, 2019, my grandfather died of Alzheimer's. He had some weird food combinations, so a way that we honor him is we sometimes eat some unusual food combinations like Spam and waffles.

He was also an accomplished gardener, so when we build a new house, we plant a palm tree in his memory of him.

In Mexico, most people remember their dead family members by putting their photos on a Oferenda and on Dia de los Muertos ("Day of the Dead"). They go to their family members' graves and offer foods and drinks that person liked and have a big celebration remembering them, even though they are not physically with them.

In conclusion, I believe in bringing new life into something that is already gone so many people do so around the world, so if someone you love is gone, try to remember them in some way.

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*"I believe in bringing new life into something that is already gone..."*

# I BELIEVE IN NOT WISHING YOUR LIFE AWAY

*Jasmine Mckerley*

I believe in many things. I believe in miracles, Jesus, déjà vu, and more. However, something that I believe in that really stuck with me ever since I was younger is to not wish your life away. I know that it seems obvious, but I know many other people and I wish our lives away without even realizing.

When I was younger, I always remember telling my parents that I could not wait to grow up. I do not know why I wanted to grow up so fast. I guess I thought being older would be so cool like in the movies. Whenever I told my parents about it, they always told me not to wish my life away. I never knew what they meant until now.

On my 14th birthday, I was thinking about what to wish for, when I finally realized what

my parents meant when they told me not to wish my life away. They meant that I should never wish it were a different day, month, or even year. When I realized that, the only thing I could wish for was to be a kid again.

I have two older brothers, Bryan and Kyle. When we were younger, we always used to hang out with each other all the time. We would build forts, play games together, and just be by each other's side. Now, we all still love each other, we just do not spend time together as much as we did, especially since they are at college. I wish I had not wished my life away so I could spend some more time being little and hanging out with my brothers. I miss not having to worry about most things like what I am going to be when I get older or having to work. I especially miss being able to go out and mess around without being considered weird or being called immature. I miss being a little kid. I regretted wishing my life away when I was younger, and I realized I did it again this summer and I regret it so much. Before I explain how I wished my life away this summer, I am going to explain why I regret it so much.

This summer, I went to the Philippines to visit my mom's side of the family. I liked this summer for many reasons, but not the ones you



Jasmine McKerley is a freshman at Trinity School of Texas. She is half Filipino and has two brothers. She enjoys hanging out with her friends and playing volleyball. Her forever best friend is her dog Max, or "Big Mac." She usually calls him "Big Mac" because he is very fat.

would think, like having no school or not having to wake up early. I liked this summer because I was able to hang out with my cousins. My cousins and I always had mukbangs (mukbangs are when you get a bunch of food and eat, kind of like a feast), we always played badminton and always watched movies together

and more. Whenever it got hot in our house, we would go to this little market beside our house for air conditioning. I enjoyed hanging out with my cousins.

Although even when I was having fun with my cousins, I secretly wished it were fall. I wanted

*"Whether it is a good or bad day, I am going to be grateful to be alive and not wish it were a different day, month, or even year."*

it to be fall because I love the fall weather and the aesthetics. It is now the beginning of fall, and all I can wish for is to go back in time to summer. I want it to be summer again, so I can hang out with my cousins. I feel like I acted selfishly when I wished my life away this summer, especially when I was having a good time.

However, I feel like the experience was a good lesson for me to remember. Whether it is a good or bad day, I am going to be grateful to be alive and not wish it were a different day, month, or even year. I am very grateful my parents taught me that when I was younger so I could realize what they meant before it was too late. Because if you live life wishing it were another day, then are you really enjoying life?

This is why I believe in not wishing your life away.

# I BELIEVE IN SISTERHOOD

*Izzie Newsom*



Izzie Newsom is entering her ninth grade year at Trinity School of Texas. She enjoys playing volleyball and hopes to attend Texas A&M University at Galveston to study marine biology.

stayed in Shreveport for one week, but she couldn't stay any longer. My parents told me that she was getting picked by a special transportation service and that she would be flown to a special boarding school in Thompson Falls, Montana. She lived there for two years. During that time, we only spoke about four or five times, and my family and I visited her three times.

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My sister and I used to hate each other. Now, however, she is one of the most important people in my life.

About four years ago, my sister was dealing with her own issues. Sometimes she would take her problems out on me. Then I would tell our parents that she was being rude to me for no reason, causing her to get in trouble. Since I was the main reason for her being in trouble all the time, her anger towards me never stopped.

One day, she couldn't take it. My sister and mom were in a screaming fight, causing my sister to move out of our house and move in with her biological dad. She didn't talk to me for a month. I didn't really mind, though. It was nice to be the only kid in the house. Then, my parents sat me down and told me that my sister was being transported to Shreveport, Louisiana. There she would be "getting the help she needed." At the time, I didn't fully understand what that meant. She

Once she got back, things between my sister and me were weird for about six months. We just didn't have the same dynamic that we used to have and adjusting to our new relationship took some time. After about a year, we started hanging out one on one more often. By doing that, we learned that we had a lot in common. For example, we both liked the same types of food and had similar music and clothing styles, and we both liked the same types of movies. Soon enough, we were hanging out every day. Typically, we would just talk or just drive around. While we weren't doing anything super fancy, we were bonding. On those long car rides, we were able to talk about anything and everything. In doing that, we realized that both of us wanted to become closer as sisters. So, we did just that. We hung out every day and told each other everything.

That is why I believe in sisterhood. My sister and I have had an extremely complicated relationship over the years; however, we now have a stronger bond than ever. I think that having complicated relationships can be very important to personal growth. By seeing and experiencing unhealthy characteristics in relationships, I can distinguish good from bad in relationships. My sister helped me with that. Of course, what happened between us wasn't fun or good at all, but it had a good outcome. That is why I am so grateful for my sister. She showed me that relationships aren't always easy, but with some time and hard work, things will work out.

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*"I think that  
having complicated  
relationships can be very  
important to personal  
growth."*





Elizabeth Nguyen has an interest in art and cats. In her free time, she sleeps to her heart's content. Elizabeth enjoys traveling with her loved ones, trying new food and hopes one day she will be able to provide and take her family around the world.

# EXPECTATIONS HAVE THEIR LIMITS

*Elizabeth Nguyen*

As a child, I was always careless and quiet. From the moment I entered middle school,

new expectations were held. I became more indulged in my studies and tried new activities that I would have previously never thought to do. At one point, my standards for

*“It is because of the people around me who help me grow as a person and see the world in a different perspective.”*

myself were unreasonably high. I thought I had to exceed everyone's expectations of me and become a “perfectionist.”

Countless late-night studies eventually became bad habits, habits that drained me mentally and physically. Little did I know that my perfectionism would soon affect my ability to get things done.

The summer before eighth grade, I started to notice how unorganized I was starting to become. I would do my assignments right before the due date instead of organizing a time to do them earlier. Normally, I retain all the information in the hippocampus part of my brain, but I was starting to forget important things. Then my brother's class was required to get a planner. I thought this would be the perfect opportunity to buy one for myself to change my bad habits. At first, writing in the planner was engaging, but I became bored a couple of weeks later. Getting the planner did not help me as much as I had hoped. As exams got closer, I became a wreck, and I knew I was not going to get anywhere if I was

not going to change.

I was stressed out for the first time in my life and I was tired. My relationship with everyone became strained to the point where I would not respond to those who texted me. I would give those the silent treatment when I was upset because if I continued to talk, doing so would only make things worse. I admit I felt selfish and guilty when others came to apologize first, but I was never good with words. I cherished my relationships with other people. However, I was conflicted with how to put my thoughts into sentences, afraid people would misunderstand or dismiss my emotions. Now as I look back, I am truly grateful to have friends who would continue to be with me despite my stubbornness and actions. It is because of the people around me who help me grow as a person and see the world in a different perspective.

As I am about to enter high school, there will be more expectations and new goals to set. This time, learning from the past, I want to change my habits and actions. I believe that expectations should not be held too high; everyone has her limits and it is okay to take a break. There are those who care about you and support you to the end. You should not push yourself until you feel ill because mistakes, challenges, and struggles are all obstacles everyone faces in life to achieve her dreams.

# GOD'S PLAN IS THE BEST

*Giovanna Pessoa*

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I believe that God has a specific and individual plan for all of us and that it is the best.

It all started when I was 8 years old. My dad had gotten a sabbatical year, which meant a year to rest from his work in Brazil. This led to him, my mom, my brother and me coming to America where we stayed in a cold but beautiful place in Golden, Colorado. In this place, my dad worked in a postdoctoral position for his year of rest. But before I get ahead of myself, I first need to tell you our situation before we moved to America, so that I can show you how great God's plan was for my family.

My family and I, for those who don't know, are all originally from Brazil. In Brazil, my father used to work an average of 12 to 14 hours daily, except for Saturdays and some Sundays. Although he provided a good amount of income, we also had a lot of debt from my mom's amusement park business (which is another long story). Because of this, my dad had a lot of stress and pressure that weighed on him. He had never been good at dealing with

stress. You might even say he was like a bomb ticking and all he needed to explode is a slight touch of stress.

In the past, when my father "flew off the handle" or got angry and yelled, it was quite sudden, sometimes to where I flinched and got scared in response. Don't get me wrong; my dad is an amazing person who works very hard, but the situation of working late hours, having to pay debts and give attention to his kids took a toll on him. In return, this took a toll on the family. In some moments I had never felt so divided in my life. Sometimes I would even have nightmares of my father leaving my mother, my brother and me because he couldn't take it anymore. In my family, a lot of times when bad things were happening in life, we became negative and our moods were down, mostly because of seeing our dad stressed and anxious. I had come to realize at a young age that things were going wrong and we were struggling. But one thing that kept me positive was knowing that God had bigger plans for my family and me. I could write more things about our situation that were very sad, but if I did, I wouldn't get to the point of how God had a plan.

Going back to the part of the story where we left for America, our year of staying in Colorado soon came to an end. It was time to go back to Brazil. But my mom had a different plan. She wanted to stay, so we prayed to God and a miracle happened. My dad received an invitation to move to Longview, Texas, for a job offer as an Associate Professor of Welding Engineering in LeTourneau University. For us, this meant an opportunity from God so we took it. And I'm glad we did and here's why: my dad's work hours, which if you remember in Brazil were twelve to fourteen hours, changed when we came to America and became eight hours. This improved a lot of things; one for example, was the reduced hours enabled my dad to have more quality time with the family. This made us more united. All I can say is that I have never been so close to my father in my entire life. For me, this is how I want our relationship to be forever and for him to be the person I most look up to.

My story is really more about what God did for my father. I wrote this to show you how great and loving God was towards my family and especially my dad. I feel this so deeply that this essay has barely scratched the surface of what feeling I associate with my family. God moved us from across the country so that our family could have not only a better relationship but also a better life with less stress. God's plan is the best. This I believe.



Giovanna Pessoa is a 14-year-old who studies at Trinity School of Texas. Her favorite things to do are spending time with her family, playing sports, watching movies, and going for walks outside in her neighborhood. Her dream career is to become an anesthesiologist.



Parker was born in 2010 in Longview, Texas. He currently lives with his mom, stepdad, and his little sister. Whenever Parker comes of age, he wishes to join the United States Marine Corps.

# SEEING THE BRIGHT EVEN WHILE IN THE DARK

*Parker Strube*

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I believe in being an optimist. Even in the darkest of situations, I find a way to see the best of things.

Life is full of hard things that can make it easy to feel beat down. That's why I think it's imperative that we find the positive,

*“A pretty well-known concept is that you cannot control others or their feelings, you can only control yourself and how you feel and to not let other people get you down.”*

the lesson, and the treasure in each situation we face.

The summer of my 8th birthday, I threw a pool party. None of my friends could make it. I had two choices. I could spend my birthday feeling sorry for myself, dwelling on the fact that I didn't have any friends in town to spend it with, or I could appreciate the fact that I got extra time with my sister, who was thrilled to have all of my attention. We played, we ate good food, and we had lots of cake. I turned what could have been one of the worst birthdays into one of the best, just by adjusting my mindset. To date, that is one of my favorite birthdays because I had a great day with my little sister. And I have a feeling it's a day she will always treasure.

Another recent time being optimistic helped me was when I was in my deer stand one night hunting wild boar. I missed a shot that I thought for sure I had, but I didn't let that get me down or ruin my day. Sure, my initial reaction was anger and frustration. I did, after all, expect better of myself. But I took

a moment to consider. I told myself the hogs would probably come back and once they did, I would be ready. So I waited, and forty minutes later, that same wild boar came right back around. This time, ready, waiting, and steady, I took aim and got a direct hit. I wouldn't have got to kill that hog if I let the fact that I missed the first shot get me down. I would have missed that opportunity by going back to my camp and sulking. So instead of wasting a day at camp, I left the lease with the prize I had been seeking.

The best time of all was when my dad and I were lowering down my stand to move it. Not only was the weather hot, but there were mosquitoes everywhere. Instead of thinking about how miserable it was, I thought about how bad my situation could be. That made the heat and the bugs a little more bearable. Being an optimist just makes life seem a lot better and easier. I can't imagine how bad it would be if I thought negatively.

A pretty well-known concept is that you cannot control others or their feelings, you can only control yourself and how you feel and to not let other people get you down. These are all examples of how true that really is, and how helpful it can be when you understand and accept that.

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# THE OUTDOORS

*Preston West*

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The best experience I ever had was outdoors. It was in the middle of July, 2024. My cousins and I were on my grandpa's boat in the Gulf of Mexico fishing for tuna. The trip was successful and we came back with around 20 tuna. I believe the outdoors is the best thing for the human body. I believe being outdoors is something that everyone should experience at least once a day.

There are many things to do outdoors such as hunting, fishing, biking, running, climbing trees, golfing, and playing football. I believe that doing these activities outdoors can create good times and good friends. Also, I believe that being outdoors under the sun has benefits. Some benefits include reducing stress, providing vitamin D, breathing fresh air, and burning more calories. The sun increases blood levels of natural opiates that are called endorphins and when endorphins are released, a person feels happier.

Hunting is something I believe to be one of the greatest things to do. There are many different ways of hunting, but I believe duck hunting is the best because you have to shoot the ducks while they are flying. Duck hunting is done during the winter because that is when the ducks migrate from way up north.

I believe, however, that the best sport and the best thing to do outside is to play golf. Golf is a sport that differs from others because it is a sport where you do not need a teammate. Golf can be played in groups or alone, but whenever you play with other people, doing so can create new friendships.

The mountains are also one of my favorite places to be. The mountains are fun in the winter and in the summer. In the winter I go skiing and sledding. Skiing is one of my favorite things, but it can also be very dangerous. In the mountains there are such things as tree wells. (tree wells are holes that build under the snow around trees). If you were to fall in one, you would most likely be trapped and die. I am lucky enough to never fall in one.

The mountains in the summer are very different from the winter in many ways. My favorite thing to do in the summer is going mountain biking. Whenever I go biking down the mountain, it is fun to do sharp turns and hit big jumps at high speeds. Another fun thing to do in the summer is go fly fishing. Fly fishing is fun, but it is much more fun to fish with a bass rod.

Of all the great things outdoors, it is very hard to get tired of any of them. I plan to keep doing all of the fun activities outdoors until my last day.



Preston West of Longview is in his first year of high school. He has been at Trinity School of Texas for seven years. He enjoys hunting, fishing, and playing golf.



Margaret Anne Wilkinison was born in 2009 in Fort Worth, Texas. She is now 14 years old and is a high school freshman. She attends Trinity School of Texas and lives in Longview, Texas. She dances at Elite and likes to hang out with her friends.

# RISK IS WORTH THE REWARD

*Margaret Anne Wilkinison*

I believe in living life to the fullest. To me, this means embracing every moment, finding joy in the simple things, and most

importantly, accepting every risk and adventure that comes my way. If I have learned one thing this summer, it would be that you

*“It is not always easy to be bold or brave. But that is what life is about!”*

never are going to know what you are missing out on until you try. In June, I made the uncertain decision to go to camp in North Carolina for a month without knowing a single soul there. But I will be forever grateful I took that risk because Camp Seafarer ended up being the biggest blessing I never knew I needed.

It is not always easy to be bold or brave. But that is what life is about! This summer I believe I have truly learned what it means to live life to the fullest.

Embrace: I believe you must embrace every moment. I have had to learn the hard way that sitting around and waiting for tomorrow will never get you anywhere. Americans spend an average of seven hours a day on their phones. I have been really trying to break this intrusive habit. I love how camp gives you the opportunity to disconnect from the outside world for four weeks. You will become so much more fulfilled by spending your day with loved ones and enjoying the beauty of nature rather than rotting in your bed while scrolling on your iPhone. It is also so important to live in the

moment instead of stressing about what is to come. If you just trust in God, He will guide you.

Joy: I believe that you must find joy in the simple things. When my counselor asked my friends and me to list “little bits of light,” some joys that we listed included: sunny warm days, uncontrollable laughter, good music, fresh cold lemonade, a crack of thunder during a nap, tubing, and making new friends. I believe you are not living your best life unless you experience this kind of joy.

Adventure: I believe you must accept every adventure and risk that comes your way. As humans, when we are contemplating whether we should make a brave decision, our brains typically jump to the scary “what ifs.” In moments like this, I often have to remind myself that nine out of ten times, the risk is worth the reward. I vividly remember on the first day of camp, sitting on the foot of my new bunk, feeling so regretful and more nervous than ever. I was too afraid to talk to anyone because everyone appeared to be so experienced and knew their place at camp. I was quietly organizing my backpack

when I heard a thick accent ask me where I was from. She eagerly proceeded to tell me that she lived in Germany. We instantly clicked, and she is now one of my closest friends. On the last night of camp, though, she explained to me that introducing herself to me was one of the scariest things she has ever done. It took a lot of courage for her to introduce herself, as she was actually just as scared as I was on the first day. But if she had never been brave enough to make that initial interaction with me, who knows if we would have become the friends that we are today.

It is crazy to think about how I learned so much about life in four short weeks! But I can't imagine my life if I hadn't taken that adventure. With full confidence, I proudly say the risk is worth the reward.

So don't be afraid when you are faced with something unfamiliar because even if your plan doesn't work out, you will learn so many life lessons along the way and you will probably leave with a good story to tell.

