

cedar sentinel

the kingsway
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the personal
essays

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NOV.
2018

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SPONSER MRS. NAIDOO

EDITOR MESSAGES

ALANNAH
TJHATRA

EDITOR IN
CHIEF



Hello everyone,

Welcome to the first issue of the school newspaper for the 2018-2019 school year! My name is Alannah Tjhatra; I am the senior editor for the Cedar Sentinel, Kingsway College's school newspaper. I'm glad to be back and I'm looking forward to experiencing my last year as a Kingsway student.

This year, I'm glad to introduce the people who have joined our Cedar Sentinel team. We have Selena Ly, who will be managing the online version of the Cedar Sentinel, and Mrs. Naidoo, our grade 12 English teacher as well as the newspaper's new sponsor. Our new staff also include Hannah Balance, Johnny Curitiba, Maycee Dammog, Vyncee Dammog, Asia Mason, Lara Nacino, Megan Villanueva, and Cassandra Whittingham. I'm looking forward to seeing these faces often in the newspaper. (:

For the month of November, we have organized a collection of narrative essays written by grade 12 English students. Some of these stories are funny, some are reflective, and some contain valuable morals to learn from. Each story gives insight into its author's life - it shows a glimpse of the student's identity; it sheds light on his or her motivations. The incidents in the narrative essays are explanations of what triggers the authors to be the people they are. Many of these stories are rooted in people's childhoods - it shows how deeply one can be affected by an event that took place a long time ago.

I guarantee that many of these stories will resonate with you or relate to you in some way, so sit down and relax a bit - then begin reading.

Enjoy this issue of the Cedar Sentinel. I'm excited to (hopefully!) see you contribute to our newspaper in the coming months.

God bless,
Alannah.

SELENA
LY

WEBSITE
EDITOR



Hi everyone!

My name is Selena and I'm in Grade 12! I'm in charge of the online version of the Cedar Sentinel, which you can find at cedarsentinel.com! Be sure to check it out! It'll include all the articles and pieces you can find in the printed version along with special features and past articles! I'm looking forward to seeing all of your stories and different pieces in the website! If you guys have any comments or suggestions on what you'd like to see on the website, just come talk to me and we can make it happen! I'm hoping for a good year for all of us and I hope the Cedar Sentinel is something that can be part of your experience here at Kingsway! Have a great year everybody!

CONTACTS

*If you would like to submit **anything** - articles, short stories, poems, photos, or artwork - to the Cedar Sentinel, please send your work to cedarsentinel@kingsway.college. We would be happy to receive your submissions.*

And be sure to check out our website, cedarsentinel.com!

NOVEMBER CONTEST

This month's contest is a throwback to something that was done by a previous editor a couple years before, and here it is:

There are a total of 7 ampersands (which look like: &) hidden throughout the newspaper. Some of them are hidden in articles, while others are easy to spot. Circle all of them, then show your copy to either Alannah or Selena. The first three people who present their Cedar Sentinel copies to us will each receive a prize. (The above ampersand counts as one.)

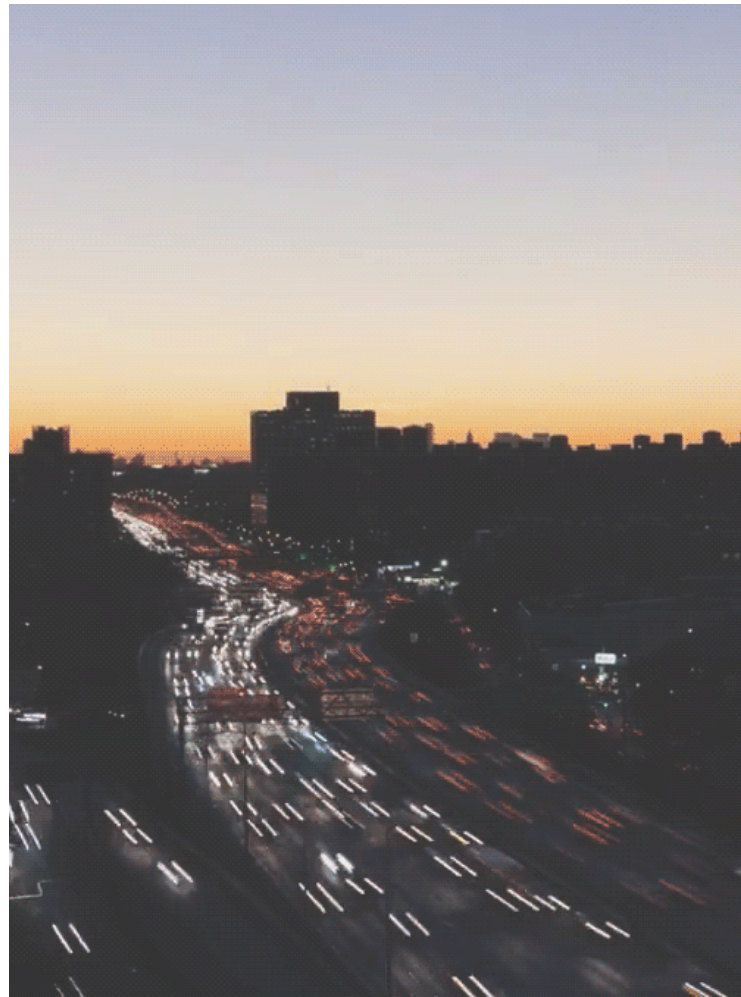
DOING IT MY WAY

Driving was my new favourite thing. Ever since I passed my road test and could go driving off alone, I just could not get enough! So, when my dad asked if I would pick him and his co-worker up from the airport Sunday morning and told me that I would get paid, I simply could not resist!

Sunday morning came, and I got in the car nice and early to make sure I would make the hour drive from Oshawa to Pearson International Airport with plenty of time to spare. However, as soon as I started the car, I noticed my first problem. I was on empty.

I had some time to spare though, so I quickly stopped at a gas station on my route to fill up. After my short detour at the gas station, I got back on the road and headed off to the airport. A few minutes of driving later, I began to wonder where my Google Maps was taking me, because it was the complete opposite direction of how my family normally went to the

airport. I pulled over on the side of the road and grabbed my phone to check where the map was taking me. To my horror, I saw that the map was taking me on Highway 407, a toll highway my mom told me



to avoid! I quickly tried to re-type my destination into Google Maps and turn off tolls so it would not give me the 407 route, but it didn't work. Because I didn't have any data, I had already pre-downloaded the whole area. This worked, but it also had limitations such as not allowing me to turn off

the toll road option.

I began freaking out and praying, asking God to help me to know what to do. I then decided to call my mom for advice. She suggested I just go home, use our wifi, and turn off the "tolls" option on my map. Stubbornly, I said no to that option because I felt I was already running late, and heading back home would only make me more late. Trying to help me, my mom verbally gave me directions to get to Highway 401. She then prayed with me and hung up the phone, having to get back to her meeting I had interrupted.

Determined to save time & get on the proper highway smoothly, I set off driving. However, after a while, it became apparent I had made a wrong turn. It seemed as if I was driving further and further away from civilization and where I knew the highway was located.

I started to cry as I continued driving because I had no idea where I was, and it looked like I was heading into the middle of nowhere! I tried to

type in directions to Highway 401, but it was giving me some weird route that was far away; not headed to Toronto. I knew that it was not right, so I just paused where I was - and through my tears, I again prayed, asking God what I should do. I then got the brilliant idea to type "Kingsway College" into my Google Maps. If my map could direct me to Kingsway College, then I was pretty sure I would know how to get onto the highway from there. I was not sure how I would get to the airport and the right terminal once I exited the highway, but I figured there would be signs to follow and I hopefully would not get lost.

So, with the new directions put into my phone, I headed towards Kingsway College. After following the route for quite a few minutes, I found myself back at the exact same intersection where I had started and gotten gas. This entire time, I had been driving around a huge loop!

The intersection was near my house though, so I decided it would be smarter to just stop and

get proper directions to the airport, instead of guessing and ending up wasting my time as I had just done.

I stopped at my house, got wifi, and re-downloaded the map with the "toll" option turned off. Getting to the airport and to the right terminal went perfectly after that. There was no traffic, and I made it to the airport in record time. Knowing I was getting there late, I drove straight to the arrival doors, not bothering to stop at the waiting area first. When I got to the pick-up zone, I called my dad to see where he was. It was a miracle, because their luggage had taken longer than normal to get to the baggage carousel. So, my dad and his coworker were just coming out the doors, ready to find a place to wait, when I arrived. After all of my crazy detours, God still managed to get me to the airport on time! As I drove home with my dad and his coworker, I began thinking about my experience earlier that day and how it was the same way with people and God. We mess up and then fight to try to fix it on our own. Finally, af-

ter we end up hurting ourselves, we surrender and do it God's way--the way that is actually better for us.

I messed up on the airport route and was lost today, but when I called my mom for advice, I would not listen. She told me to go home, use our wifi, and re-download the route - but I wanted to save time and do it my way. So, I ignored her advice and tried to figure it out myself, getting more lost and becoming a crying mess.

Finally, when I surrendered and stopped trying to find the way myself, I ended up making a loop and finally arrived at my house. I was then able to get wifi and make it to the airport smoothly. I was praying to God to help me when I was lost, but He could not help me unless I was willing to accept the help. I wanted to be on time, but I was just making myself more and more late. However, when I surrendered my problem to God, He was able to help me get to the airport on time. God always knows what is best. We simply need to trust and let Him lead. ■

"TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, & DO NOT LEAN ON YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING. IN ALL YOUR WAYS SUBMIT TO HIM, AND HE WILL MAKE YOUR PATHS STRAIGHT."

≡ PROVERBS 3:5-6 ≡

THE CONTINUOUS LOSS

The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand.

There's no question about it, I'm definitely going to win this position and become class president. This thought filled my mind as I walked down the chipped white-tiled floor of my grade 8 homeroom. Red was the colour of my sweater that brisk autumn day where I would present my well-rehearsed speech in front of my classmates and teacher, as red is the colour of confidence and determination. This was the vibe I wanted to project.

Voting time arrived and the ballots were quickly filled out. I voted for myself.

My sister had been the president of her class a few years prior - that put pressure on me, the younger sister, to follow those steps.

A well-spent, fun-filled recess following our speeches was the last "happy" moment of my day. The hallway rapidly filled with students who were anxious and impatient to check the list of the winning candidates for our class executive. Emily, who had run for pastor, came up to me with what I considered a not-so-happy look on her face.

"We both didn't get it."

Those cold words ran down my spine. I cried the whole car ride home - all 3 minutes of it.

Grade 9 crept quickly around the corner. Election time arrived once more.

"I nominate Anna Flores," a voice spoke out within the crowded classroom.

There's no way I'm winning. I lost last year - it'll just be the

same this year, I thought to myself. I dragged my feet behind me, as if collecting dust, and reluctantly exited the classroom while the voting occurred inside. Once again, I did not win. It was not a shock. I had started to lose self-confidence. The school year flew by. However, my disappointment faded slowly.

You may think that this is where the story ends. "Girl loses two times in a row and gives up." Of course, it doesn't end there. Grade 10 rolled around like a soccer ball spiraling its way to the goal. Another thought now entered my mind: *Hmm, maybe this year I have a chance. I just need a way to prove myself.*

There were two other candidates for the position, and

our sponsor asked each of us to say a short speech on the spot. Ideas deluged my mind. I could feel cold sweat accumulate on my shaking palms. Without having time to think, I passionately and convincingly said, "I want this position because I believe that I can help make our school year the best one yet, with a lot of fundraisers and class spirit to help us win Class of the Year!" A little choppy, but that was all I could muster.

For the third year in a row, I lost.

I started seeing a pattern. This wasn't about people thinking that I couldn't get the job done - it was all based on popularity. I realized that it has become the norm in society that a person's success or popularity is based on how "cool" or "in" they are with the crowd. Once I grasped this concept, I finally accepted that the position of class president would never be mine.

Grade 11 poked its head into my

door like a shy cat. And that was what I had become: a hesitant cat. I had become so embarrassed of losing year after year. It was a domino effect. I did not want to get nominated. Class meeting came around and I got nominated - again. I decided to just "give it one more shot". It was already decided in my mind that I would not win. This time, it was only against one other classmate. Once the voting was over, the two of us walked back into the classroom to find out who had won. The sound of hands clapping was all that I could hear.

"Anna, you won!"

The statement I had longed to hear for three years. It was sweet!

I thought I was going to pass out from happiness. I went home that day with the biggest smile across my face - at which point, I learned a valuable lesson. It's not about liking the situation you are in or not; it's about how you make the most out

of it. I may have lost in grade 8, but I had more time to study - resulting in my becoming the valedictorian with two of my other girlfriends. I may have lost in grade 9, but being music minister, I was able to witness to students through song. I may have lost in grade 10, but I became class senator and choir vice-president. In spite of all my complaints and questionings, all I had to do was turn my disappointments into God-given blessings.

You never know what the future holds - but when curveballs are thrown at you, make the most of it. As I write this, I am somewhat anxious as tomorrow is voting day for my senior year. I guess I'll have to see how it turns out. While the saying goes, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." I say, "*When life gives you disappointments, make a difference.*" ■

SAMUEL
PELOBELLO

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A

performer

As a child, I loved music. I was born into a musical family; my mother played professional piano and my dad loved to sing. The earliest memories of my childhood were reading books and listening to my mother play the piano. In my childhood pictures as a one-year-old, I was seen at the piano bench with my mother,

playing music with her.

Later in life, I heard my cousin play the violin for the first time. I loved his playing immediately and looked forward to his playing every time he took out his violin.

From then on, I decided that I should play the violin and become just like him.

My first memories of playing violin music were actually

at Kingsway College. I had my first lesson at the age of four, in a dusty room above the old gym, with my first violin teacher, whom I will never forget.

Soon enough, after about a few days I started to play my first songs. Even later on I played at my teacher's recitals for her other students. I remember playing and



over to my cousin's teacher, who worked for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. After having a few lessons with him, he began pushing me to play things I did not know were possible to even play.

He pushed me past what I thought were my limits.

On top of playing at church and at family gatherings, I started playing at competitions in Oshawa and Toronto. It was fun. I played a variety of contrasting pieces - slow and fast, long and short, technically challenging and emotionally challenging. One piece was so long that it took me fifteen minutes to play it by memory!

But those were the good times.

As I progressed through grade seven and eight, I started to lose interest in playing. Soon after I entered high school, I almost lost all interest. I was already playing pieces that were just as hard, if not harder, than the ones my cousin played.

I lost motivation, wondering why I was playing the violin in the first place.

Time went by, & I continued to lose interest. Violin became just something I knew how to play. The time I spent practicing went down drastically - it went from about half an hour every four or five days per week to about fifteen minutes once or twice a week.

The pieces that my teacher continued to give me became more and more difficult. Eventually, they stopped becoming harder technically, but rather harder emotionally. Since I had almost no motivation to pick up my violin to practice, it was very difficult for me to convey my feelings while I played. My teacher kept telling me that it was no longer about simply playing the violin;

it was about performing for others and helping people through music.

At first, I did not understand what he was saying, so I just took note of it and pushed it to the back of my head. However, one day I was listening to a singer on Youtube. She sang phenomenally, pouring her emotions out while singing. While she was singing, I could not help but notice that people were crying in the audience. After I finished watching the video, I wondered why people kept crying. It was only then that I understood my teacher's words: that performing is all about helping others through your music. I finally understood that, in order to really perform for others and touch them, you have to touch yourself with your own music first. Only then can you touch others with your music.

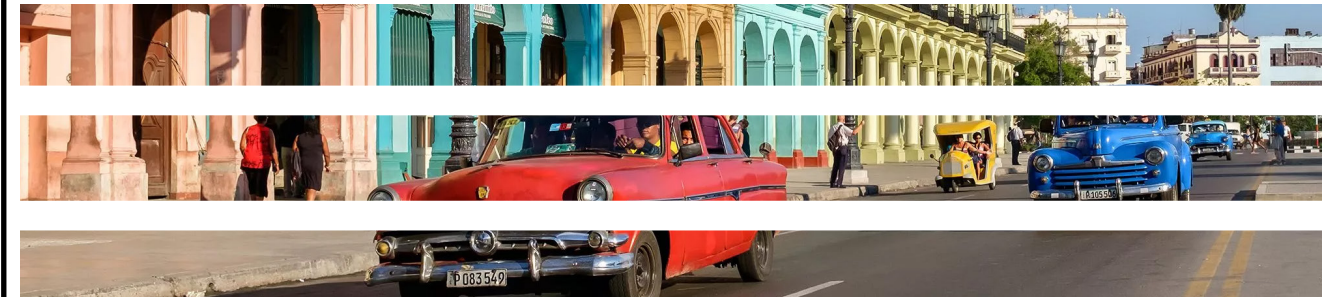
During the next lessons and practices, I tried my best to enjoy my own music. It was not easy, but eventually, I learned to appreciate it. My perspective on music as a musician was changed. Now I did not just play the violin - I was a performer.

Instead of thinking that music was just a hobby and something that was enjoyable as a side activity, I started thinking in the direction that music can really bring people together and help others convey their emotions.

Now, to me, music is a form of communication; a language. A language that anyone from any background or ethnicity can speak. Although learning how to speak this language is not easy at all, it really is worth learning in the end. And with it, you can change the lives of countless others as well as your own. ■

CLESHA
FELICIEN

MONEY CAN'T BUY HAPPINESS



In our modern society, some people tend to believe that their possessions will bring them happiness. Some people assume happiness lies in money, education, status, the latest technology; the list goes on. People work very hard and spend the rest of their lives trying to obtain these things in exchange for happiness. However, over the summer, I learned the importance of being grateful and content with everything I own. It takes very little to make a person happy. Happiness may not be found in possessions.

Palm trees lined the side of the road like soldiers awaiting their next command. They waved their hands back and forth as the hot morning air demanded movement. Curiosity, excitement, and anticipation filled me as the Cuban scenery mesmerized senses. I allowed the rhythmicity of

the bus and the musicality of the air conditioner to put me into a deep sleep. It was officially the start of my annual family summer vacation.

I woke up abruptly as my sister tapped my knee and drew my attention to the window. The once-beautiful scenery had become obstructed by the blatant sight of poverty and depreciation. This view rapidly passed before my eyes; it made my soul quiver. Cuban families resided in deteriorating concrete apartments that were hanging together by a thread. Big cracks ran up and down these apartments like grape vines. Even the blades of grass seemed to hang their heads in shame. Families of six lived in one-bedroom apartments because they could not afford better housing.

For hours, we drove through poverty-stricken communities and passed hundreds of families who tried their best

to earn a few dollars by selling souvenirs.

A tidal wave of anguish depleted my soul as I saw elderly men working on their farms outside in the scorching heat. They forced their tired muscles to persevere as they meticulously cut each strand of grass with a cutlass. I carefully observed as communities of people bound together in front of their apartments to make a big pot of soup. Each family shared the little food they had so they could to make it through another day. The tour guide told us that an average person could barely afford to buy one pair of shoes each year. That's when I was violently struck with the realization that I could have been in their shoes. It could have been me running around barefoot and sleeping on concrete floors. It could be me, plowing the fields and harvesting food for my family. It could be me,

working outside without air conditioning as the sun scorched me like an oven. I pondered upon those thoughts as we exited the bus in a town called Trinidad.

The city looked like a picture cut out from a history book. Cobblestone paths wove their way around the city like snakes slithering through the jungle. Century-old cars from a black and white movie lined the sidewalks. I observed as an elderly man played his guitar at the side of the road. As people walked

by, tourists, especially, dropped money in his hat. Age ate at his face and time tore holes through his clothes. However, his hardship and the past did not steal the joy he had manifested within. Each strum on his guitar sent stories of joy and contentment that filled the hearts of those who stopped to listen. It baffled my conscience - the old man showed me that true joy is not something you can purchase from a store. The pleasures of this earth cannot fulfill the void that joy satis-

fies. The Cubans knew how to find joy in all situations they encountered. They knew how to be content and innovative with the little they owned. Their smiles and demeanor spelled out happiness.

I thought to myself, *If I could only take them to Canada and change their way of life. Then I realized, They are already living their best life. They are content with the little they have.* As I learn to be content, I will be living my best life as well. ■

CURTLY
NEWLAND

GETTING MY G2

I have lived on this earth for seventeen short years. During this time, I have done many things. Some of them I am proud of; others, not so much. However, there is one event that, upon completing it, really gave me a sense of accomplishment and pride in my own abilities: taking my G2 driving test.

Before going in, I was extremely nervous. Many of my older friends and classmates had warned me that this physical and mental assessment would be very difficult to complete and that I would need a lot of practice in order to pass with a high mark. With that advice, many prayers, and hours of practice, I was able to successfully pass the

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test with only a minor mistake that brought my final grade to a ninety-eight percent. Taking my G2 test and successfully completing the second stage of the Ontario Graduated Licensing System gave me an incredible sense of accomplishment; it is an achievement I will never forget.

There were several things that I needed to do prior to the test in order to secure my success. I had my parents fill out the form and transfer the five hundred dollars to cover the cost of the Drivers Education class. Every Sunday I spent 6 hours in a classroom learning all about the correct signals, proper signs, and procedures of driving. I spent a total of ten hours in a car with my driving instructor who tutored me in the ways of

defensive driving and helped me increase my confidence and skill level on the road. I also spent the majority of my summer driving. I used every chance I got with my parents, grandparents, and anyone else who would allow me behind the wheel. There were many days when I was tired and wanted to give up, but I continued to push through the boredom and kept practicing.

The day of the test was the worst. My driving instructor drove me to the Drive Test Centre and helped me to sign in. We found a parking spot, pulled in, and proceeded to await the arrival of the Drivetest examiner. Sitting there in the car, I began to question myself. *Had I practiced enough? Was there anything I forgot to bring? What if the test was even harder than everyone*

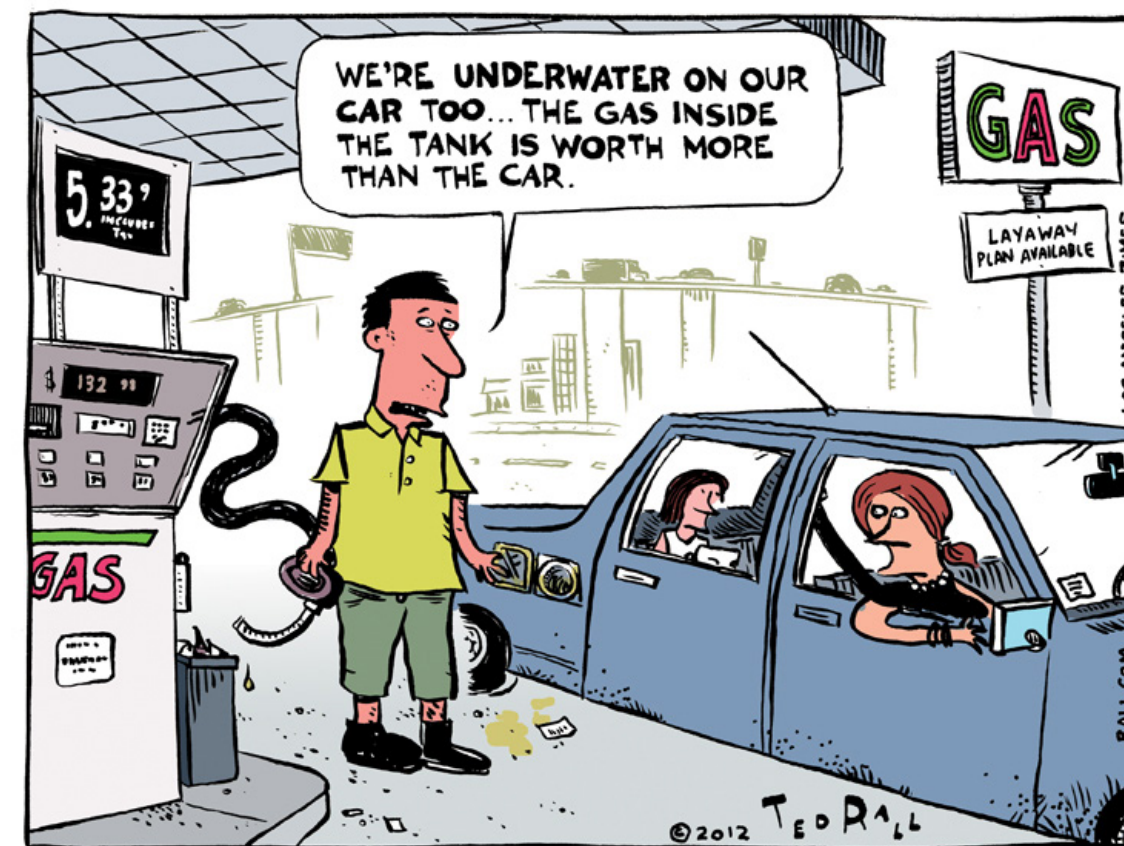
made it out to be? Almost an hour after the appointed time, the instructor finally approached my car. She asked me for my license and had me check to ensure all of my lights were in working order. After that, the examiner got into the car and we were off. As we were driving, every muscle in my body was tensed like a coiled spring waiting to be released. Every two blocks I had to remind myself, "It's okay, take a deep breath. Relax, you can do this." I was able to successfully complete the three-point turn when prompted, maintain the correct speed, and stay in the right lane. However, because of my nervousness, I accidentally performed an incorrect downhill park, turning my wheels to the

**"AS WE WERE DRIVING,
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left instead of the right. The examiner seemed to sense my internal jitters and, in the spirit of forgiveness, allowed me a second chance to correct my mistake. After a few more minutes of driving, she asked me to return to the Drive Test Centre. I entered into the parking lot and pulled into an empty parking space as directed. Once I put the car in park, she turned to me and said the words that changed my life: "Congratulations, you passed your G2 test." As my mother drove me home, I was in a state of euphoria. Everyone was messaging me to give their congratulations and show their support. As I held my temporary license in my hand, a warm feeling of satisfaction washed

over me and I felt a sense of pride welling up inside me. I was finally a licensed driver, able to drive by myself wherever I pleased without anyone ever looking over my shoulder. Later that night, I drove my family to a restaurant to celebrate my accomplishment with a delicious chicken dinner. It was one of the best nights I've had and the memory will stay with me forever.

I remember that, as a young child, it had always been my dream to be able to drive. After taking my G1 test, my goal was partially reached, but I wanted the freedom to drive alone. So I worked hard, practiced, and studied my way to a stage two graduated license. Setting goals and working to complete them is one of my greatest joys in life. Next goal: Full G. ■



MOTIVATING GOALS

"WHAT REALLY MATTERS IS THE TOUGH, LIFE-CHANGING JOURNEY THAT YOU WILL GO THROUGH SO THAT REACHING THE GOAL WILL BE EVEN SWEETER."

Throughout my life, my personal goals have changed hundreds, maybe thousands of times - from wanting to get that new lego set, to finishing a video game, to getting my high school diploma. These goals are what drives me forward, they are what push me to get out of bed in the morning to take the steps needed to reach them. In addition, I am very competitive and I do not want to lose. These two characteristics combined make up a big chunk of who I am and who I will be in the future.

When I was young, it was always my aim to be at the top; it still is my aim now. Whether it be a game, a test, or simply a competition of

who can eat the fastest, being the best at something gives me a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment.

One of the things that I am currently dealing with is high school. So one of the goals that I have challenged myself with is to become valedictorian. I was one of three valedictorians in grade five when I was at my French immersion school.

When I was informed that I was to make a speech for my classes, both in English and in French, I was filled with excitement and happiness because I knew my parents would be proud of me. This feeling really stuck with me; now I really want to obtain the same feat.

In grade eight, I graduated from College Park Elementary School as one of three salutatorians - and although my parents were still proud of me, I wasn't satisfied with my own accomplishment.

When I finally got into high school I was really motivated to get high grades to be able to become valedictorian. After each year, that feeling only grew stronger. Now that I am a senior, I have been trying my best to stay on top of all my classes to achieve one of my big goals.

Seeing this pattern occur as I grow older, I predict that when I enter university, I will be even more driven to excel in everything I do. I am starting to see where this is coming from. All of this leads to my desire to be able to provide for my family. and also to provide for my future family. All I want for my loved ones

"THESE GOALS ARE WHAT DRIVES ME FORWARD, THEY ARE WHAT PUSH ME TO GET OUT OF BED IN THE MORNING TO TAKE THE STEPS NEEDED TO REACH THEM."



is for them to be secure and happy, and these goals are what will lead me there.

Having the same goals as others also increases the amount of motivation that one experiences. Sharing interests with others will encourage both individuals into doing what they must to reach their goal.

However, my nature to be on top all the time may become a negative aspect if it gets out of control. I am very competitive, and this could affect my relationships with family, friends, and acquaintances. It could

even be the reason that hinders me from reaching my goal.

To make sure my goals are straight, my number one goal should be to develop my relationship with God. God will be my Guide so that I will not aim for the wrong goals, or aim for certain goals for the wrong reason. As long as I make God my top priority, all of my other priorities will follow. God will be able to help me grow as a person in order to fulfill his will, even if it is not mine.

In conclusion, goals are a crucial factor in the development of one's

character. The goal could either be negative or positive - but if you dedicate yourself to them, one's character will evolve little by little. My goals might change, but what really matters is the tough, life-changing journey that I will go through so that reaching the goal will be even sweeter. ■

CARALYNN
CHAN

MY FEAR OF ESCALATORS

Why am I afraid of escalators? One bad experience in my life has caused me to become petrified whenever I have to use the escalator. Upon seeing an escalator, I will escape like Houdini. I will take the stairs or the elevator unless it is necessary that I use the dreaded escalator. I will whisper a few prayers to the Man Upstairs before embarking on that dangerous journey on the metal escalator. However, I was not always crippled by this fear.

It all started on one glorious afternoon. The birds were



singing. The sun was shining. My fear of escalators was non-existent. I was on a lovely family vacation in Chicago, and my family had decided to bring me to the American Girl store. Previously, I had pleaded with my parents to bring me there, as a sinner begging for forgiveness would. My relatives and family knew I had a crazy obsession with those trademark dolls, so they bought me two beautiful dolls. Today I was going to see the official store for the first time. I was off the rails with excitement! I kept chattering to my parents like Alvin the chipmunk. All I could do was fantasize about how much fun I would have exploring the fascinating store. I wanted the visit to the store to impact me drastically. Boy, it did really impact me.

When I arrived at the store with my parents, I was at the peak of my caffeine high. Scurrying here and there. Scanning the history about the dolls. Looking at minuscule doll clothes. My doom and apparent damnation inching closer, coming gift wrapped like the Trojan horse, but in an American girl store. With little girls shrieking like mythical harpies trying to buy dolls.

The overwhelming store with its sights and sounds had two different levels. I, along with my family, was on the first floor. I saw everything on the first floor within an hour. My poor parents were literally chasing me like we were playing a game of cops and robbers. I tugged at my parents' sleeves and asked if I could run ahead to the second floor.

"Mom and Dad, may I please go ahead to the second floor?" I asked in my high pitched voice.

"Okay, but be careful Caralynn," my dad relented as he gave me these parting words.

Still, to this day, those four words haunt my existence like Casper the friendly ghost. They send irritating shivers up my vertebrae. This was the day the universe prepared my casket and my tombstone - heartlessly engraving my name onto the tombstone. I was in for a rude awakening - and at the American Girl store, of all places.

I saw the seemingly innocent elevators. The destination of "downstairs" was in sight. Light from heaven glimmered against the metal elevator, but it was more than meets the eye. I quickly raced towards the elevator like Usain Bolt before he aged. I carelessly put one foot on the escalator like any normal human being. But what I did next was going to change my life forever.

I kept my other foot on the top floor while my other foot was on the moving escalator. Of course, the human body cannot stretch like Elastigirl. So I proceeded to do the splits all the way down the elevator.

Listen carefully. I cannot do the splits. So there I was. Doing inhuman activities on an American Girl escalator.

The escalator grooves mercilessly dug into my tender skin. Pain ignited in me. I cried in utter anguish all the way down the escalator. When I reached the second floor I looked at my ankles. There were deep cuts oozing out fresh blood from where the escalator grooves marked my skin. I felt as if I had received the mark of Cain. I cried in agony to my parents.

Upon hearing my call of distress, they found me with at the foot of the elevator with tears streaming down my face. They called the first-aid attendant to help me recover from my ordeal. He sat me on a chair and

disinfected my battle scars.

"You're a brave little girl. You should have been more careful." The first-aid attendant remarked as he put kid-friendly band-aids on my wounds.

"I'm sorry, Sir," was all I could muster as tears rushed down my face like the Niagara Falls.

From that moment on, my parents stayed with me in the American Girl store as I hobbled around. The day was ruined. My terrifying fear of elevators had woken up from its long dormant nap. The dream had ended; it was now morning. That is why I am afraid of escalators. ■

EMILY
KUCHURIVKSI



A couple of years ago I found myself alone in a garden, in the heart of Paris, France.

As I close my eyes and try to remember details from that day, I can't help but smile. I remember how the brisk wind tickled my skin and tried to make me shiver. As the clouds passed by, the sun finally came out of hiding and surrounded me like a blanket. I remember running my hands through a nearby fountain and splashing water on the flowers. I laughed because I realized that I could do absolutely anything and no one would ever know who I was.

I was completely living in the moment.

As I looked at the gorgeous variety of flowers, plants, trees, and people, I couldn't help but praise God for His

creativity. In the midst of all the beauty, I found an empty bench, pulled out my Bible, and started reading.

My thoughts were suddenly interrupted as someone took a seat on the bench right across from me. Glancing up, I saw a young guy - in his mid-twenties, I would guess. He was wearing fashionable and modern clothes and seemed a little bit out of place in a garden. I remembered seeing multiple empty benches around the garden and wondered why, of all the other benches, he had chosen to sit right in front of me.

I expected to continue sitting in silence, but I was wrong.

"Bonjour!" He cheerfully spoke up.

"Bonjour." I dryly answered, not really interested in starting a conversation.

"Vous parlez en francais?" He asked me if I knew how to speak in French. From all the years learning French in elementary school, I still knew only the bare minimum.

"English," I responded, getting a little bit annoyed. All I

"BONJOUR!" HE CHEERFULLY SPOKE UP.
"BONJOUR," I DRYLY ANSWERED, NOT REALLY INTERESTED IN STARTING A CONVERSATION.

wanted was to sit in peace and read my Bible. Was it too much to ask? I went back to reading, and he got the picture that I was busy.

So he stopped talking. That is, until he noticed my Bible. He instantly recognized it and exclaimed, "You know the Bible too?!"

Now I was interested. What did the random, low-riding guy sitting in front of me, in the middle of a random garden in Paris, have to do with the Bible?

"Yeah, I think it's a really good book. How do you know about it?" I responded curiously.

Through his broken English, the guy told me that he had been introduced to God recently and that he had willingly accepted the Bible as truth. He shared how he had come from the Caribbean to Paris, in hopes of fulfilling his dream to become a famous singer. Just by the look in his eyes, I could tell that he hadn't had much success yet and

that he was discouraged. As we talked more about God, his face slowly lightened up. I saw that his passion for God was undeniable. It was contagious! The more we talked, the more engaged I became. Soon I had completely forgotten about my previous frustration.

As the conversation slowly came to an end, he stood up, turned, and hesitated for a moment. Then he turned back to face me, looked me in the eye & said, "I am so happy that I had the chance to talk to you. I have never talked to someone about God and my beliefs. I can see that you are a God-fearing person. Good luck in life." And with that,

he left.

As I reflect back on the experience, I wish I could have restarted my encounter with the stranger. I was ashamed of my initial behaviour and lack of kindness. I realized that when I shifted the focus off of myself and my needs, I was able to experience the world around me. I learned that there are so many experiences that are waiting to happen; however, they cannot happen when one is focused on self.

The conversation that I initially didn't want to start was the conversation that changed my life. ■

to procrastination and lack of motivation) to decent, all within one semester. My prime example of this "talent" being displayed has always been in grade ten math: I received an F on my first test - but by the time final report cards came around, I had worked my way to an A. Since then I had vowed to never do that to myself again. Sadly, I did not change this habit all throughout my third year of high school. Despite all of that happening, I ended

up with an A average for my whole junior year in high school.

During the summer I decided that I would do better and try (when I told myself I would try, I meant I would do better) in my last year of high school. During the last of summer vacation, my family went to the General Youth Conference Eastern Canada - and there, one of the seminars that I attended was an inspiration for me. The topic was about time management - something I needed greatly. After it was over, I made yet another decision to make my senior year better than my junior year. I started off by borrowing the textbooks that I would need for the new school year and reading them. One of the major problems that I still had was that I was not sleeping properly. Several days throughout the summer, I would not sleep through the night. I either could not stop reading a book until I finished it, spent hours staring at the ceiling, or was watching something very interesting that I would sacrifice

my sleep for. Later on, the rigorous sleep schedule caught up to me and I just could not fall asleep because my body was used to running on



very little amounts of sleep if any at all. In order to solve this problem I had carelessly created, I decided to force myself to put the book down and go to bed at the same time as my sister.

So far, it seems that I am on the right track in order to not fall into a slump again. I have decided to not go based on feelings when it comes to school for my final year. The phrase that I have chosen for this year is: Try. To others, that may seem very lazy, but to me, that translates as: Do. I have changed my schedule to include a spare, and that seems to have made a great difference so far. I am also in the process of fixing my sleep schedule. I know that everything is on me, so it is my job to get everything done. Even though it is only the beginning of the year, my attitude towards school has changed drastically. Regardless of that, only time will tell if I have truly learned my lesson. ■

AALIYAH
ROBERTS

MY JUNIOR SLUMP

The sophomore slump. In my case, it was more of a junior slump. Generally, everybody hits a point in high school when they just don't care anymore. In my head, school just did not make sense anymore. So I started slipping and did not prepare for tests the way I previously did. Not everything I handed in was on time, and I could not have cared less. My thought was, What is logical about the school system? There was no point in math, and art was an easy A. In my head, one of the only subjects that made the most logical sense was physics. That was because we got to learn the science behind things that actually happen in life - how things work.

Other than that, I did not want to be at school during this time period. The only classes I had, that I actually considered fun and useful to me, were band, physics, and literature. For example, band gave me a sense of freedom - freedom to play music - which was much appreciated. It gave me an opportunity to use and improve different skills that I have acquired. Playing the flute and piccolo helped with my comprehension - when I first started playing years ago, I had to learn how to read sheet music, memorize fingerings for the notes, and play adequately.

I was at school physically, but mentally, I was only occasionally present. I think

what happened was that the school's repetitiveness got to me and I became easily sidetracked. My slump did not happen during my second year of high school because that was the year big changes took place, such as the changes in the school schedule. During that year, I also gained more control in choosing my classes. In grade eleven, my schedule was generally similar to my grade ten schedule, with only minor changes.

Closer to the end of the school year, I told myself that I needed to snap out of the slump and try harder. In my head, I had a really bad "talent" that needed to change - the "talent" was that I could raise my grades from bad (due



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