

Beginnings XVI

A PUBLICATION OF ADULT STUDENT WRITING OF THE

Ohio Writers' Conference

OHIO LITERACY RESOURCE CENTER



Funds for producing and distributing this publication were provided by the Ohio Board of Regents under authority of Section 223 of the Workforce Investment Act, 1998. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Ohio Board of Regents or the U.S. Department of Education, and no endorsement should be inferred.

Foreword

Each piece of writing in this book is a passport, a two-way path between author and reader. We don't have to fill out an application to be granted this privilege, nor do we have to prove our worthiness to some government agency to procure it. Still, it doesn't come without great effort. To achieve the kind of passage that takes place in this book, the authors have become full-heartedly attentive to the moment and mustered the courage to write down their truths. In return, we readers require the spirit of curiosity—and the freedom—to read what is here.

Sitting in my quiet room on an early spring morning, I read what is between these covers, and I am able to go everywhere. I can slip between the bars of a jail cell to sit side by side with Lauren Moffitt, the author of “My Goals,” who faces herself unabashedly. “It took me three weeks to stop blaming everyone else for what I've done,” she writes. It's taken me some time, too, to stop blaming others. I, too, have shut myself away from others in that lonely trap. But as I read her admission, I'm no longer alone in that human tendency, and she's no longer an unknown prisoner, far away in a jail cell. “I plan on doing great things with my life,” she declares. As I read these words, I feel her rise and prepare to pass through the self-imposed bars that have been holding her back. With her pen and her simple truths, she's lit a fire under her resolve to make her life shine, and now I'm lit up with that same fire.

I thumb through the book to the story “Syrian Uprising” by Manal Alfaleh. By the time I arrive at the end of the second sentence, I am standing in Syria beside the Syrian-born author, watching the four seasons spin by. Later, when she describes Syrian children scrawling, “We want a freedom” across their school wall, I feel those words scrawl themselves across the wall of my own heart. I, too, want a freedom. I, like these children, and like Lauren Moffitt in the jail cell, count on doing great things with this life. For one,

I count on having the freedom to read these words, and to write them again—on yet another school wall or in the pages of yet another book—without getting arrested and having my fingernails torn away by my captors. The Syrian children have not been so lucky, and their families still have not found them. For over a year now, news accounts of the violence in Syria have numbed me on a daily basis, but because this writer has brought these children and their longing so alive for me, I am finally standing barefoot in the place where our hearts intersect.

My life opened a little wider now, I turn to the poem “I Am” by Larra Wall, where she confesses, “I hear more angels crying every day.” With the sadness of “Syrian Uprising” still aching in me, I find solace in this image. There should be weeping, for there’s much to lament in this world, though we make very little room for it in our distracted lives. But right here, right now, this line of poetry sweeps away all distractions and plants us smack-dab in the middle of lamenting. In the very next line, the poet offers us the image of “people dancing in the rain.” Despite our capacity for sowing and reaping terrible sorrows, she reminds us, we humans also have the capacity to rise up and thrive in the midst of our troubles. We have it in us to do great things with our lives.

At the end of the first stanza of “I Am,” the poet declares, “I want something more than existence.” I am here to bear witness: By giving us lines of poetry that wake and shake us, she has already realized that desire. And, reader, after you have spent some time gaining passage into the many worlds that live between these covers, I have a hunch you will agree with me about this: Because these authors have mustered the grit it takes to write down and share with us their truths, each of them has done something great with their lives.

Go ahead, reader. Turn the page. Find in this passport called *Beginnings XVI* the permission to do something great with your life, too.

Katie Daley
2012 Writers’ Conference Keynote Speaker

I was. I am. I will be.

*Selected writing from the
15th Annual Ohio Writers' Conference, 2012*

My life is a book with so many unwritten pages.
This year I started a new chapter.
The page from today will be one of the most exciting in my life.

In the past, I was unable to love myself.
In the past, I was unable to have enough confidence to dream.
In the past, I was unable to fly because I didn't have any guidelines
on how.
In the past, I was a know-it-all.

In the present, I am able to disable every negative thought.
In the present, I am able to love because I have a purpose.
In the present, I am able to believe I have a voice.
In the present, I am humbled.

In the future, I will be able to have choices and be able to choose a
life I have only seen in my dreams.
In the future, I will be able to achieve more than I ever knew
through writing.
In the future, I will listen, learn, and give.
In the future, I will light up the world with my dream.

Words are powerful and exist in all cultures.
Words travel around the world.
Words connect minds and hearts together.
Words can save us all if we stay able.

I was able to overcome.
I am growing.
I will succeed.

I was.

I am.

I will be.

Able.

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Acknowledgements

Each year since 1997, the Ohio Literacy Resource Center celebrates ABLE student authors and honors their accomplishments at the Ohio Writers' Conference. Over 300 pieces of writing were received for review and possible publication in *Beginnings XVI*. Seventy-three pieces were chosen for this edition. We are proud to publish the 16th volume of exceptional writing by Ohio's ABLE authors and commend these writers for their courage to share their stories.

We also honor and thank ABLE teachers and tutors who dedicate their time to encourage students and provide instruction and guidance. We applaud each instructor for their passion and creativity to motivate ABLE students throughout their writing journeys.

It is with gratitude that we acknowledge the Ohio Board of Regents' Adult Basic and Literacy Education Program. Their sixteen years of support for *Beginnings* and the Writers' Conference have allowed many ABLE students to become published authors and public speakers.

We welcome our 2013 keynote speaker, author Mike Mullin, to this year's Writers' Conference, and we're pleased to have our resident storyteller Lyn Ford participating again this year.

Table of Contents

Foreword	iii
I was, I am, I will be.	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Table of Contents	ix
Confidence	1
Pride	13
Happiness	25
Hope	39
Faith	51
Courage	59
Wisdom	75
Motivation	85
Growth	97
Inspiration	111
Author Biographies	125
Honorable Mention	135

Ohio Literacy Resource Center

Enhancing Adult Literacy

Confidence

I Am A.B.L.E.

So they say that I am A.B.L.E.
And capable of so much more.
They say I have to believe,
Like I never believed before.

To some this seems so painful,
'Cause believing comes from within.
Doubtful at times and unconvinced,
I guess I'll try it again.

Believe in myself for what?
The hard life left me a spare.
Seeing this took some patience.
I know patience at times is rare.

Given the chance, we all are A.B.L.E.
To live out our biggest dreams.
So, child, believe in yourself,
When nothing is as it seems.

Know that the moon can be touched,
And the stars are just a wish away.
With some hard work, sweat, and tears,
Your future comes alive today.

So now I know I am A.B.L.E.
And capable of so much more.
I say I do BELIEVE,
In myself unlike before.

~ *Justina Hall*

Adjusting to Life in the USA

I arrived December 1st in the winter of 2010 and faced many changes in my new country. My biggest change was the language. I could not understand anything in English. I felt very frustrated because I could not communicate with other people. After the Christmas season, I started English class (ESOL). I met many people from different countries including my country of Honduras. This has been a good experience for me because when we are talking about different cultures and customs I don't feel as alone. They understand the changes between home countries and here.

Another big difference was the weather. I came from a country where the weather is tropical. It was hard for me in the early days. I had to buy winter clothes and dress to go out of the house. That's when I started to understand how difficult winter is in Ohio, especially driving in snow storms.

I worshipped differently in Honduras, too. I now go to a Presbyterian church, which is much different than the Catholic Church I grew up in. I said the rosary in the Catholic Church and told my confessions to the priest. Catholics believe the prayers of the saints can help us, so they celebrate the day of each saint. Even though the worship in the Presbyterian Church is different, I feel comfortable because I have made many new friends at the church. They gave me a warm welcome.

Another change was the closeness to my family, as this was my first Christmas far away from them. I especially missed my mother and Joshua, my nephew, who is like a son to me. He lived with me for 8 years. I had never been away from my family for more than 2 weeks. I was accustomed to visiting with them every Sunday for lunch and talking with them on the phone every day.

I married my best friend about one year after I arrived in the USA. We had a beautiful church wedding in Pittsburgh. The church was built in 1893 and has beautiful stained glass windows. Many of

our good friends were at the ceremony. We had a lunch reception in a nice restaurant.

Now I feel more comfortable here. I am more accustomed to the weather, the language, the food, and the culture. I have good friends, my English is improving every day, and I am happily married. The one recommendation I would make to anyone who is moving to the USA is to learn English before coming here.

~ *Nery Mejia*

The Purpose of My Life

It may be simple, but to me, it is the absolute most important standard to live by: Always show kindness. In the innermost parts of my soul is a burning desire to do my very best to make the world a better place for those around me. I want to show kindness to my family, my friends, and all people I encounter. I have been blessed by the examples of kindness from others, too.

My family is the most beloved gift I have on earth. They deserve all that I can give them. My little brother, who is 13, is having a rough time growing up. I've yelled at him when he has annoyed me, and I felt terrible afterward. Now, all I can do is apologize and be as kind as I possibly can be to him. He loves to help haul firewood; therefore, I will be right beside him pushing that wheelbarrow!

I was in the hospital recently, and the countless acts of kindness shown to me were overwhelming. Friends called, visited, and sent me beautiful flowers that made me cry. Their kindness made my stay in the hospital bearable. It wasn't that one friend gave something huge, but that so many gave a little. That experience totally blew me away to a place where I knew how much I was loved.

All around me are children who are lost and alone. A soft touch, reading a story to a child, or even just a smile can have an effect on the child the rest of his or her life. A foster girl named Emily once asked me if I could be her mommy just for a day. With tears in my eyes, I wrapped her in my arms and held her for a good long time, and then I told her, "Yes, I will love you as much as a mommy ever could for as long as I live."

Wherever I go and whoever I might meet in this crazy life, I hope to touch their lives. Perhaps a simple act of kindness will make one person's entire life an easier road to travel. If I do this, I believe I have fulfilled the purpose of my life.

A Day of Cooperation

I have two elderly friends who are over eighty years old and married. He is a retired professor from a private college and she is a retired teacher from middle school. I have known the couple for over three years. They have many stories. Here is a little story of one day of cooperation, which impressed and touched me.

My two elderly friends are very independent. The retired professor does several volunteer jobs in the community. One is to deliver Meals on Wheels to the homebound elderly. He has been doing this for many years by himself. Recently, he had a minor stroke. He is slowly improving, which is typical of stroke patients.

One cold rainy winter day, the retired professor asked his wife, who has volunteered teaching ESL for 18 years, to help him deliver Meals on Wheels. She did not know the route or the details: who would leave their door open, who wanted her to knock, or who wanted her to ring the doorbell and wait for an answer. The elderly professor did not trust himself to walk on the slippery leaves or up steep stairs without a railing. The two cooperated that day. The elderly professor, who knew the route, drove the car, while the elderly retired teacher walked from the car, carrying the meals. Together, they managed a job neither of them could have done alone.

~ Lisa Kelvin

HIM

Saturday, November 27, 2010 at 11:29 p.m.

When most children are asked what they are most scared of, they will tell you normal things. Like the dark, or my dog running away, or getting lost and Mommy and Daddy not being able to find me. However, when I got asked this question, my response always was "being alone." Very simply put, that was my biggest fear.

I got older and then I met him. I was still a child, but I got taught how to love someone that I chose, without him ever really loving me back.

I got taught what it felt like to be with someone all the while still being alone and not really knowing it.

I learned how to trust while being lied to.

I learned what it was like to be told I looked pretty and yet get yelled at for other people looking at me.

I was left alone again after some time. Yet now I had a child.

Then one day I met him.

He taught me freedom. While having chains.

He taught me acceptance without ever being good enough.

Then I was alone again. But I was left with another child.

One day, though, I met HIM.

I was not looking.

I was not in need.

I was OK knowing I had two beautiful daughters and it was just going to be us forever.

But here he was.

I learned how to love and be loved back.

I learned how to trust and be safe in the arms that held me every night as I slept.

I learned what it was like to be told I was beautiful even though I felt like I looked horrible.

But I could see in his eyes he only saw beauty.

I learned what it was like to fight without fists but only words and

that was OK because it only meant we really cared and what we fought about mattered.

I had another child.

A son this time. And that was OK.

I grew every way a woman can and it was OK.

I gave life and he held my hand while I did it.

We had a family.

And finally my daughters and I were not alone.

The day he asked for my hand, I was not alone.

The day he adopted our daughters, everyone knew we were family.

I don't get scared that I will be alone.

I worry that forever is not long enough.

I believe that our children know what love is.

I believe that our grandchildren will see what we share is pure and without boundaries.

I believe that our great grandchildren will hear stories of what we shared, and that will make what we have timeless.

All because HE showed up on my doorstep when I was not looking. 11/27/10

~ Kristin L. Pollard

You Choose a Symbol

If you let me choose something as my symbol, definitely my choice is a bird. One of the reasons is that I am a birdwatcher. I enjoy bird watching! I am thankful and amazed that there are these wonderful biological things living with our humans in the world. This is lucky for our humans. Birds are so beautiful, so colorful, so cheerful. When you are upset, or you are nervous, or all-in-all you are not happy, you listen to the singing of the birds, then you will calm down at once, your bad mood will be blown away by the songs of birds. So, it is true, a bird is the best doctor for the soul. I think that they are like angels from God.

In fact, the species of bird was here much earlier than humans on the blue planet. Around one to two billion years ago, birds were here and have enjoyed being here for a long time. But when humans appeared on the world, we destroyed so much space for the birds. Many trees and wet-lands are gone, and these bad things still happen every day. I feel very sad about this. I think that humans should respect birds and take care of them. The second reason, why I chose a bird as my symbol – I would like to show my respect to birds with this symbol.

Which bird is my favorite? This is a difficult question to answer for me. I like birds of prey; they are brave birds. I like song birds; their songs are so fantastic. I like bright warblers; their feathers and songs are so splendid. I go to Lake Erie to watch the warblers every year, and I am always excited to see them. Also I like wading birds, their slender legs, and their lean wings. All of them have endless charm.

My husband favors Carolina Wrens, because they are cheerful all year. Even in the winter, Carolina wrens still sing loudly... their cheerful mood affects us and lets us be happy with them. I like Ohio's bird, the Northern Cardinal. I remember very clearly, when I was here for my first winter, the earth was covered by the white snow for a long time. No more bright, colorful views, my sights were boring. But Northern Cardinals were the only red

color in our backyard. Many of the Northern Cardinals stood on the crabapple trees. They looked like Chinese lanterns hanging there. These sights let me feel happy and surprised.

As I learned about many birds, now I favor the Eastern Bluebird. Eastern Bluebirds are small. I love their blue color like the ocean, and I love their intellect and courage living in the nature. Eastern Bluebirds face many natural enemies, even some big birds are their enemies. They survive by using their wisdom. For example, when they are nesting, they can choose at least three places to build their nests to confuse their enemies so the enemies cannot eat their eggs. One year, I watched a couple of Eastern Bluebirds nesting in our backyard. They built their nests in different places; this confused me too. Finally, I did not know which nest was chosen by this couple of Eastern Bluebirds.

I chose Eastern Bluebirds as my symbol. They are truly smart and lovely birds!

~ *Chun Qin*

Pride

A Letter to Jonathan

I don't know how many years it will take, but there is no doubt in my heart that you will be walking and talking soon. I hope that I am alive to see what a wonderful man you will turn into. I think that you will become a musician or perhaps a dancer because you love music and have such a great dance partner.

I will never forget the first time I started tapping a rhythm on the table of your chair. You got very excited and kicked your feet and pounded on the table with your hand. I knew then that we had made a connection that would last forever. Your strength is deep inside you and is keeping you strong. God is smiling on you and you will become a good man.

I look forward to working with you on the drums so we can "talk" to each other through the music. You have taught me how to love a person who has special needs. Thank you for being my beautiful and loving grandson.

All My Love,
Your Grandma

~ Lucy Talley

I Am

I am a lover, not a fighter.
I wonder how life will unfold.
I hear more angels crying every day.
I see people dancing in the rain.
I want something more than existence.

I am a lover, not a fighter.
I pretend I'm queen of the stage.
I believe there are many gods.
I feel love and life fill the air.
I used to worry about where life was leading.
I used to wonder every day and more.

I am a lover, not a fighter.
I understand that love is always within.
I say, "Stop the war and hate."
I dream of happiness, and it's a good thing.
I hope my dreams can take me far away.
I am a lover, not a fighter.

~ Larra A. Wall

Gods' Legend

I was born in China, but when I was 3 years old, my family and I suddenly moved to live in Venezuela, South America. In our house we spoke only Chinese, and in school we spoke only Spanish.

Some years later as I grew older, I realized that I belonged to two different countries with completely opposite cultures and languages. I often felt confused about everything and sometimes a little bit frustrated.

My Chinese auntie was worried about my feelings. One day, when she was trying to make me more comfortable, she told me a legend. It was a legend about the Gods and humans:

“The Gods wanted to create humans to love, pray and serve them. But the Gods were afraid that one day humans would disobey them and take their places. That’s why they decided to create humans that talk different languages. That way, they wouldn’t be able to communicate with each other, and they would never become so strong that they could replace the Gods.”

Perhaps that story isn’t far from being true. But I think the Gods forgot two important human characteristics: we are brave and we are curious. We can travel from countries all over the world and then meet in the same classroom to learn a single language, English.

I realized this situation after being in the ESL class in Reynoldsburg, Ohio. Our class has women and men from Africa, Ethiopia, Armenia, Albania, Japan, Macedonia, Honduras, Mexico, Brazil, Haiti, and China. Our class is rich in culture; so is the world. What is happening in our class is happening all around the world. Foreigners like us are learning a new language and culture in other countries.

Now I can speak four languages, and my son is learning three languages at the same time. I know that we can't replace any Gods but I believe that one day soon, all humans will be able to communicate in any language we want, and the Gods' Legend perhaps would be completely forgotten.

~ *Pui Yin Ng*

The Slave

From sun-up to sundown
I clean up your house
While you lie around.
I get your kids off to school,
And yet still you don't move.
I wash and iron your clothes.
All you got to say is "Make sure there ain't no holes."
But why me? I just want to be free.
So I pray every night,
But who am I to fight in the light?
I have no right.
All the lines on my back
Can surely account for that.
So now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray to God one day we will be free.
Amen

~ Denice Jones

The Day I Learned to Wash Clothes

I was very young, the age of seven, and standing on a milk crate when I experienced my first washing machine. In those days, they were known as the “ringer type.” The machine was very different than today’s washing machine. It had ringers on the top and the base was the agitator. You would fill it up with water and pull a handle for the agitator to work. The clothes would go in to wash them. After an hour, you would put the clothes through the ringers.

Drying the clothes was the greatest. You would pick up a 50-pound clothes basket that was sopping wet and take it outside on a nice day to hang the wet laundry on a clothesline. You would pray for sunshine and a breeze that day. Sometimes, you would get rain and wind instead. The excitement came when you looked out your window and watched your clothes dance back and forth in the breeze while the sun rose up over them! Unlike today, back then it would take two or three days for your clothes to dry! You would do this process at least twice a week.

Times have changed. Today, you don’t have to dry clothes outside. They have come out with a machine that dries your clothes. It would still seem nice to dry your clothes outside, but the dryer is nice to have in the winter.

~ Marilyn Kuhns

To My Son

To my son,

I loved you before I ever laid eyes on you.
I loved the idea of you before I thought about when I would have you.
I loved the feel of you kicking, growing, and getting ready to meet me for the first time.

The first time I saw you, I saw a little piece of perfection on earth in the form of a little boy.

I saw your ear and others worried; I, however, kissed it and said you were perfect.

I sang to you when no one was around to hear how bad I was.

You just curled up and fell asleep to the sound of my voice.

I warmed you when you were cold and carried you when you could not yet walk.

I fed you before you could tell me you were hungry, and I washed your hair to calm you before bed.

I watched you take your first step to me. I saw the smile just beam over your face after you realized what you had done.

Many years have gone by. You are a little man now, yet in so many ways still my baby.

Now I cut your hair so you "look handsome like daddy."

I cook your spaghetti because you say that I make it the best.

I read to you because you love to snuggle with me as I tell the stories of knights that fart and bears that kiss you goodnight.

I hold your hand so I don't get lost.

And I tuck you in with Blue so you feel safe despite the fact you don't sleep with me anymore.

I will continue to watch you grow into a man.

A man with a beautiful heart.

A man with unimaginable compassion for young and old alike.

A man who will make a wife proud and a child blessed.

These things are far away, but as a mother I feel time slipping away.

So until then I will cherish the memories of the baby boy I had.
The little man I see with the beautiful smile on his face every time
he sees me.

And the knowledge that the future holds the son who will be
taller than me.

The son who will be too big to sit in my lap.

The son who will have a woman light up just as bright as he does
when you see each other across the room.

And the child you will one day have who will tell you that you are
the best daddy ever like you tell your daddy now.

I loved you before I knew you, Connor.

I love you more today than I ever thought my heart could handle.

And I am proud to call myself your mom.

~ Kristin L. Pollard

Romania

Romania is my country –
Old buildings and beautiful,
Many places to visit,
Authentic foods and traditions,
Near to everything because it is centrally located,
Impressionable fashion,
Atractive country.

~ *Paraschiva Bogdan*

Gabriel's Angels

We share the same pain of Cystic Fibrosis

We find out

We sign up

We donate

We dedicate our time

We walk as one

We pray together

We stride for the future of our children

We are a team

We are Gabriel's Angels

To my son Christopher Gabriel Courtney

Mommy loves you

You are my angel

~ Amanda L. Miller

Happiness
D

Internet Bride

Do you believe in an “Internet bride”? If you met somebody on the other side of the earth, would you dare to marry him? If you were to marry him, would you be afraid to move to another country with a different language and culture?

I am the “Internet bride” in this story. I came from China. My husband and I met on the Internet two years ago. I still remember when I read his personal information on the Internet. His statement, “I like family oriented activities,” deeply moved me as this was a value that I strongly shared. Although his pictures were not clear, I still wanted to write an email to him. The story started!

When you want to know somebody very well, you are not satisfied with only receiving emails. The attraction between us grew. We wanted to see what the other looked like and what the other sounded like so we arranged a video chat. When he appeared on my computer, I was nervous and shy, but my husband was so gentle. We found that our thoughts were completely similar. When we were face to face, whatever I was saying, he could understand me. When I could not express myself very well, he already knew what I was going to say. What I felt was so amazing. We knew that we fell in love with each other at that moment.

We met in Hong Kong three months later to confirm our relationship. After waiting for the visa for eight months, I left my home country, I left my friends, and I left the only area that I had known. I came to America only to marry my true love! Everything in America is different from China, such as the different language and the different culture. What could we do to make a happy life for our international family? We knew that it is important for us to have a good communication. We loved each other very much. We hoped we were able to give each other the best. We wanted to have a better life. So we knew we had to accept and respect the differences between us. After we got married, everything went smoothly. We did a lot of things together. We also celebrated

both America and Chinese holidays. We eat Chinese food on week days, but we eat American food on weekends.

I always wake up with a great smile every day. I always enjoy the colorful trees when I am driving to school. I always enjoy everything about our international family. Sometimes I still cannot believe I am in another country and sometimes I still cannot believe that two people from the other side of the earth would meet and get married. But I know only one thing – just do it! Your dream will come true!

Thank God! We will cherish our life with each other and we will be grateful forever!

~ May Sheng Horvat

My Day with the Dog

My day usually starts about 6:00 a.m. The only days that start at 5:00 a.m. are when I keep my great-nephew while his mom works.

The first thing that I do is to take out the dog for her morning business and to run around the yard. Next, she and I go in to fix her food and make my toast (which she usually eats half of). While I get her dog food ready, she is in my chair or lying in front of the fireplace. She lets me know when she needs to go out again.

We get Brice, my oldest nephew, up for school. She sits and watches him eat his breakfast. Then we watch him get on the bus.

Anywhere I go, she has to follow. She doesn't like to be alone. If she takes a nap, it is beside my chair, near my feet.

I don't know if she can tell time, but about 3:00 p.m. she sits by the window to watch for Brice to get off the school bus. She runs from the window to the door.

My brother-in-law usually gets home from work at 3:45 p.m. She knows it is time for him to be home and waits by the window.

I am told that when I leave the house to go somewhere, all she does is lie in my chair until I get back. At night while I'm getting ready for bed, we go out so she can do her business, and when we come back in she usually gets a drink and is told to go to bed. She will go in Brice's room and get into her bed for the night. This is my day with the dog.

~ Mary Stump

Like a Mom

I wake him up - like a mom.
but I am not!
I get him dressed - like a mom.
but I am not!
I make him food - like a mom.
but I am not!
I take him to school - like a mom.
but I am not!
I play with him - like a mom.
but I am not!
I hug him - like a mom.
but I am not!

Being an au pair is not always easy, but when I am looking deep inside myself, I know it was the right thing for me to do. When it comes to hearing three little words, "I love you," your world will completely change!

~ Judith Leibinger

Memories of Christmas

I remember ...

That my family taught me about baby Jesus. He was born on December 25th. His birth is celebrated as a holiday from the 25th until January 6th which is Epiphany.

I remember ...

How the living room was decorated. Our family put ever-green branches on the fireplace with lights wrapped in them. My mother placed nutcrackers inside the evergreens on the mantel. The homemade Christmas stockings were hung underneath the front edge of the fireplace.

The Christmas tree used to sit in front of the bay window with bright lights strung on it. Old World ornaments, which looked like fruits and vegetables, adorned the tree. We always put shiny a star on top.

I remember ...

That the family went to church on Christmas Eve. After Christmas Eve service, when we got home we were allowed to open one present. Then, Mom and Dad said, "Wait until morning comes. Go to bed now!"

I remember ...

One special Christmas Eve, while I was in bed, I had a dream. In that dream, I saw elves at the North Pole working in Santa's workshop. They were making toys, and the elves were dressed in green. The toys were all colors, red, blue, and purple. Then I heard a loud noise on the roof. I just knew it was Santa and his reindeer! So, I jumped out of bed.

I remember ...

That I pretended that I was a little mouse and I snuck quietly down stairs, (I did not want my parents or Santa to hear me.) As I passed by my parents' room, I saw that they were in their bed. When I got down stairs, I saw Santa! He was wearing a red suit. After he finished putting gifts under the tree, Santa vanished up the fireplace!

I remember ...

Lots of memories about Christmas and also about my childhood years with my family. However, Christmas 2012 holds memories of a special event that I will always hold dear in heart. My brother gave me a bracelet for Christmas that said "Love" on it. It meant to me that my brother will always love me forever. I cried when I got it, because I was shocked and knew that he loved me. (We used to fight all they time when we were kids, so love was a new feeling for me.)

I remember Christmas ...

Baby Jesus' birthday;
Christmas Eve services;
A beautifully decorated home with Old World ornaments
on our tree;
Santa;

But most of all,
I REMEMBER LOVE!

~ Mindy Faulkner

The Last Day of the Year

On December 31st, my family and I have a big reunion for dinner. We cook different types of food, like tamales, pupusas, and salad; we drink horchata (rice flour, milk, water, sugar, and cinnamon) and fruit punch. We spend all the evening talking about our hopes for the new year and making jokes. At 7:00 p.m. we go to the dinner table and thank God for all the blessings, and then we start eating . After eating we dance until it is 12:00 a.m. We receive the new year with a big hug for everybody in the family.

~ Glenda Aguilar

A Mother's Unconditional Love

The love I carry for you
Flows like the blood through my veins!
The warmth of your hug
Is like the rays of the early morning sun.
Lying there with you in my arms
Makes me feel like I'm lying in the
Clouds with an angel.
The love I carry for you
Is pure and unconditional.
We flow like a river
smooth, rocky, cold, or warm
But always there.
And that is the love I carry for you.

~ Joanne "Nicky" Roach

My Happiness

Be in contact with nature,
Observe the connections of life,
Respect the time of each creature!

Hug a dear friend strongly,
Be friendly to an unknown person,
Learn, learn!

Try new foods,
Feed off of hope,
Believe in my dreams,
Make these dreams come true!

Discover new and different ways,
Stroll calmly on the sand,
Have fewer things,
Enjoy how it feels.

Climb a mountain,
Be surprised with the overview,
Take pictures!

Laugh!
Live in a hot place with special people,
Have a summer of opportunities!

My Happiness

~ *Manuela Salve Roquejani*

Sandwich

Yummy bread cut in half
Tasty dressing spread on it
Teriyaki chicken on a bun
Fresh lettuce, crunchy, crunchy
Roma tomatoes, juicy, juicy
Hungry tummy eats it!

~ Mei-Ling Lin

Mommy's Kisses

I look into your little eyes,
And I hold your little hand.
I hear your little voice.
It helps me understand.

The way things are,
Shouldn't always be.
Mommy's trying hard,
For your little eyes to see.

The world is a big place
For someone little like you.
So mommy's here to help,
To guide your way through.

There is nothing that can break
Our bond of love and care.
You are my little precious one,
Even if mommy's not there.

So make a little wish,
And close your eyes tight.
Dream of mommy's kisses,
When you go to sleep tonight.

~ Justina Hall

Hope
J

My Eyes Are Open, Yet I Cannot See

My eyes are open, yet I cannot see.
Surrounded by dark, in cold, stale air
With my feet beneath me, do I dare?
I step ahead in search of more floor.
Longing for light, I feel for a door.
A noise from behind, slows my explore.
Immersed in black, I turn to look back
I listen for more, but the silence is sure.
I turn back to begin my search once more.
Will I ever find a door?
The light that I am longing for?
Finding a wall of stone and moss,
I suddenly fear that all is lost.
Then with nothing more than time as the cost
I am led from the black, without looking back.
A gift of confidence is bestowed upon me.
I now stand alone, for the world to see
My eyes are open, now I can see.

~ Patrick A. Lockhart

Syrian Uprising

I am from Syria. I love my country because all people are nice there, and people can see beautiful nature four seasons in the year. In Syria, there are many historical areas, amazing tourist places, famous delicious restaurants, and exciting shopping centers.

One day, some children wrote on the school's wall, "We want a freedom" and "Go out Bashar" (president).

After that, the intelligence agents came and arrested the children and put them in the jail.

They tortured them, beat them, electrocuted them, and took their nails off.

All families of the children went to the intelligence department to see their kids, but the parents were informed that they couldn't see the kids, and they should forget if they had kids here. They were told to go back to their homes.

On the second day, the uprising in Syria started, and from March 2011 until now the government forces killed about 60,000 people including women, kids, and old people. Many millions have found refuge in other countries.

I hope the killing in my native country will end soon, and the people can live in peace and freedom.

~ Manal Alfaleh

Ballroom Dancing

My mother called one day and said she had won six free ballroom dancing lessons for her and a guest. She asked me if I would go with her. I thought about it for a few days and decided to go. We always liked dancing. We always watched the old musicals and dance programs on TV, and every Sunday my father would put on "Polka Variety" or old records and we would dance around the living room. As a little girl, I always dreamed of being the next Ginger Rogers.

We took the six weeks of lessons and enjoyed the time together. I was disappointed to see it end. I decided to talk to my dance teacher to see what I could do to continue my lessons. He told me that because of the progress I had made that I should consider teaching and that I could work in the phone room to pay for my training. I was so excited that I started work the next day!

Six weeks later, I completed my training and began teaching. One year later, I was training my first student for competition and training for my first competition with my instructor. It was so exciting to share this milestone with my first student. Unfortunately, due to the health of my husband I was not able to continue teaching or go to competition.

Six years later, I had another chance to compete. Thanks to family and friends I was able to train and go on to competition. I was entered in three dances and took first place in all three!

~ Shirley Goslin

Pregnant

Pray and hope for my baby to be safe and healthy.

Ready to have my first baby ... and scared.

Enrolled in everything that would help me take care of you.

Gained weight and can't wait to lose it.

Night sleep, bye bye, my baby is coming soon.

Am I having to wait 3 more months to see you? I miss you already.

Night and day, reading and learning how to take care of you.

Tonight I'll pray for you to be safe and healthy.

~ Hadami Elgabroun

My Goals

My name is Lauren Moffitt, and I'm in the Washington County Jail at this time. The time I've been in here has taught me a lot. I've gained a lot and also have lost a lot. I'm losing my two kids, Mayson and Deserray to my father. In order to gain custody back, I must show that I can provide for myself and that drugs will not get the best of me.

It took me three weeks in jail to stop blaming everyone else for what I've done. The only reason I've opened up my eyes is because I didn't have the drugs in my system to be able to block out the memories or to use them as a crutch for what I've done. Being able to stay clean has helped me open up and realize what I have to do in life to be a good person and to be a great mom for my two kids. When I am released from Washington County Jail, I plan to do great things with my life. I plan to get a decent job which is going to be difficult because I've never had to have a job. My husband has always provided for me, but I know that if I'm at home with nothing to do, I'll go crazy. I need the job to occupy my time and make me feel good about myself. It will feel good to do well and be able to provide for my kids on my own while standing on my own two feet.

Besides finding a job, for things to change, I must change my environment. That includes my friends and even some family members if that be the case. This will keep me on the right path and not the cold, dark path that I was on before I was placed in jail.

I'm willing to say that jail has changed me and made me want to be a better person and mother. I know if it wasn't for this place, I'd never have stopped the thing I was doing, so yes, people can change in jail, and learn to do better, and not be repeat offenders. All they have to do is take the time to open up their eyes and believe it can happen.

~ Lauren Moffitt

I'm Broken

I love you, but it feels like our love is flying away.
I smile when I feel like crying,
I cry when I feel like laughing,
I laugh when there is really nothing to laugh about.
My heart no longer beats fast or slow
when you come and go.
I no longer get that feeling when we kiss or hug.
My question is – what happened to our love?
Do we work it out or let it go?

~ Jazmin M. Benton

My First Month in America

I began my new life in Canton in December 2012 during the coldest season. It was quite a contrast to my tropical country of Vietnam. I froze every time I stepped outside. My hands and legs were numb.

The winter here is so harsh. Although I knew I had to watch out for the black ice, I could not seem to avoid slipping and sliding when I was dropped off from the car. I was angry with myself. Why was I so careless? I promised myself that I wouldn't let the black ice trip me again.

Some people say that "language and a car are the keys to opening your life in a new country. If you don't have these two things yet, you're still stuck." This saying has proved to be correct for me since I have come to America. Sometimes, I want to find out about some places on my own, but I cannot because they are too far from my house. I am only able to walk around near my area. I have also noticed that there are no sidewalks where I live.

Despite the inconvenience of no sidewalk, I really enjoy shopping. I always walk on the left side of the road to watch out for the cars coming towards me. It takes me five minutes to go from my house to the Giant Eagle supermarket on foot so I usually go there to look and buy some things. There is a wide variety of goods and imports from a lot of countries. Everything that I need has been available. I love it so much.

However, I am not happy because I still have some trouble with the cashiers. They speak English too quickly. It shocks because I want to reply to their questions immediately, but my mouth doesn't cooperate. My tongue seems stiff, and my voice makes strange sounds. None of the cashiers understand what I say. Consequently, I have realized how important the language is for me. Fortunately, I have had a chance to begin to improve my English at

Canton City Schools. I have been glad to meet some classmates from different countries there. I hope one day I will be able to speak English well and have a good job here.

~Van My Nguyen

Say Goodbye to My Dear Argentina

Eleven years ago, I said goodbye to my country, my family, and my friends. I said goodbye to a life full of joys, sorrows, and experiences. The truth is, it really hurt to leave my country. I was angry at Argentina because at that time the government was not stable and the economy was bad.

On November 22, 2001, my partner and I came to Ohio to make a new life for ourselves. During these years we had two beautiful girls who are our princess daughters.

Everything here is so different from Argentina. The food, the culture, and the people are all different. But I am happy to meet many people from other countries who speak many different languages.

Day by day, we learn and experience something new in America. We correct our mistakes and learn to be better people. That is what life is all about. Today, I thank God for all he has given me: work, health, home, and a beautiful family to care for.

Someday, I hope to return to my country where I was born to live and enjoy all the beauty of my beloved Argentina.

~ *Silvana Guzzo*

Faith

Dear Son

Dear Son,

You were born on April 6, 1979, and taken away from me on March 17, 2006. I will never forget that particular phone call – I could not believe it was true. I had just talked to you four hours before your life was taken.

You were my first born, and you were full of life. You always could make anyone laugh no matter what kind of mood they were in. Whether you knew them or not, you were able to make anyone laugh. I remember when you used to stop by the house and you would take everything out of my refrigerator, and I do mean everything. Then you would walk out leaving everything on my table for me to put away. I remember how mad that use to make me. But now – I wish you were here to do it all over again.

One thing that you left behind was your beautiful daughter. Boy, oh, boy, does she ever look like her daddy. She not only has your looks, but she has your mannerisms as well. I do not get to see her as much as I would like and hope for. She is a very sweet little girl. You would be so proud of her. She is full of life and so very loving – just like her daddy, my son.

I do believe you are in a place where there is no more pain or suffering – a special place called Heaven. I do believe that you can hear and see me. I also believe that God has made you my guardian angel from above. This is a message that I tell my family and friends: “Although I cannot see or hear him, I know that my son is with me in spirit all the time.”

There is not a day that goes by that I do not spend some time looking at your picture and telling you my deepest thoughts. I will never forget the last words you and I shared ...

I know this letter will not bring you back, but it does help me make it through the days when I just sit down and write to

you about the way I feel. The day is ending. This is not a goodbye but rather a goodnight. You are always here in my dreams and in my heart.

Love,
Mom

~ Donna Bell

Lies Vs. Truth

People will fail you;
they will lie,
and disappoint you.
People will abandon you;
they will hurt you,
and forget about you.
They will, also, tell you that you have no purpose.

But God says:
I will never leave you,
nor forsake you.
I will always love you
and be near to comfort you.
I will pick you up when you fall,
and I will call you my own . . . forever.

~ Katie Felumlee

Some Years Later

Mrs. Luella runs a boarding house. She is a very well respected woman on 143rd Street. Helping people in their time of need is what she loves most. Just ask her church members at Holy Missionary Baptist Church. But what a surprise Mrs. Luella is going to receive.

On a Sunday afternoon around 3:15 PM, church had let out for the day. Mrs. Luella was standing over her more-than-perfect honey-glazed ham in the oven. Yams were simmering on top of the stove. The smell of fresh green beans cooking filled the kitchen.

The doorbell rang. "Buzz." "Buzz."

Mrs. Luella made her way to the front door.

"Yes, who's there?"

On the other side of the door, there was a gentle voice.

"What's your name, son?"

"Roger."

Mrs. Luella looked out of the peephole. To her surprise, she remembered that thin face.

"Oh my Lord," Mrs. Luella said. She opened the door quickly. Mrs. Luella was astonished to see the young man she had grabbed around the neck and dragged home after his attempt to steal her purse.

Roger's voice was nervous but calm. "Hi Ma'am. I'm not sure you remember who I am. I'm the..." but before Roger could get another word out, Mrs. Luella said,

“Lord knows I remember you. You’re the young man who tried with no success to take my pocketbook. What are you doing here, son?”

“Ma’am, I am here to say thank you. I have changed my life because of you. I had never met anyone humane to me before I met you. I want to offer my gratitude. Thank you, Mrs. Luella.”

“Son,” Mrs. Luella said, “God teaches us to forgive and to help someone in their time of need. At that time you needed help, so I provided you with help. Have you stopped snatching purses?”

“Yes Ma’am,” Roger quickly replied. “Because of you, I educated myself and became a youth counselor.”

“Mrs. Luella, I would like to give my help and a donation to your church.”

“Son,” Mrs. Luella replied, “what I did for you needs no repayments. It is a blessing from God. That will be enough. As for your help, take your pick and paint brush for the weeds are growing, and the paint is chipping on this old house.”

After that, Roger was a familiar face on 143rd Street at Mrs. Luella’s boarding house.

Roger and Mrs. Luella became close friends. Roger continued counseling young boys.

As Mrs. Luella says, “God does work in mysterious ways.”

~ Hope Turnage

He Gave It All

When I was just a little girl,
I often wondered why things happened to me,
that made me want to cry.
I often heard of fairytales that ended happily.
I wonder – will this tale end that way for me?
I thought there was no hope at all, and all was lost.

And then I found Jesus, who gave it all.
Oh, yes, He gave it all for me.
The sky seems so much clearer as His love touched my heart.
His word gave me hope.
He never would leave me alone.
He gave His life because of sin; that was His plan for me.
Now my tale will end happily. Why?
Because He gave it all for me.

~ Rosemary Willis

Courage

The Love I Lost

Last year on October 11, 2011, I lost the love of my life. He was a very special man. He was my life and my best friend. Stanley never met a stranger. He was always joking around with other people. He always tried to help others, and he loved kids a lot.

I spent three long days at Riverside Hospital with him. On the third day his doctor came to tell me that Stanley was dying. I didn't want to believe what I was hearing, so I went outside to call my family to let them know. Most of his family was already there.

When I went back into the hospital, I started having chest pains and trouble breathing. That was the last thing that I remember. When I woke up, I was in a hospital bed. When I got see my family, they told me that I went into shock and that I didn't know anyone. I really felt bad about that, but my family told me it wasn't my fault, that it was OK, and they understood. After they took the machines off of Stanley, they rolled me up in my bed to the I.C.U. to see him. I was able to see him one last time to say my goodbyes, give him one last kiss, and tell him how much I was going to miss him. It was the hardest thing I ever had to face. Stanley was never coming back home.

Everyone that knew Stanley liked him. It was hard to believe that my husband, my one true love of thirty-two years, was gone. It has been a year since Stanley has been gone, but there is not a day that goes by that I don't think about him. Every night before I go to sleep, I talk to him. I tell him how much I miss his touch, smile, love, and just being together. I tell him that I love and miss him every day. He is still in my heart and soul.

My one true love and my best friend.

~ Linda M. Seymour

Heroin Epidemic: Killing Our Children

There is a new epidemic affecting so many children and families today. I believe unless it happens to you or someone close to you, you cannot truly understand the power and control it has. It is killing many naïve, troubled, and/or merely peer-pressured teenagers. The epidemic is heroin.

The day this horrific epidemic struck my family was a day I will never forget. It was the Fourth of July. The family was over for a cookout. Everyone was having a great time swimming, playing horseshoes, and just enjoying the beautiful day together. Everything was perfect all the way down to the bluest sky I have ever seen. There was not a cloud in the sky. After we watched the fireworks, I remember having the strangest feeling in the pit of my stomach. I knew something was not right. Within an hour, the phone rang. It was my son. He was hysterical. He kept repeating, "Mom, my friend, he's dead, Mom!" When he calmed down a little, I asked where he was so I could get him. When I arrived at the hospital, my son was sitting in a chair sobbing like a little boy. All I could do was hold him tight and say, "Let's go home. We can talk tomorrow."

The news I heard the next day was unbearable. He told me that he went to Cleveland with a few friends and bought heroin. They all shot up together. His one friend kept "falling out." He still didn't seem right by the time they made it back home, so they called an ambulance. Unfortunately, he was pronounced dead before reaching the hospital. I was speechless. Many emotions and thoughts ran through my mind. I started crying, thinking, "Lord, why? Where did I go wrong?" I knew I had to put a plan together. I decided to home school my son. I removed his cell phone and computer and made sure he had a family escort anytime he left the house. My plan worked great, or so I thought. It ended in two weeks. I woke up one morning, and he was gone.

As you can well imagine, every time the phone rang, my heart dropped. And sure enough, I finally received that phone

call. A friend of my son's called to let me know that she found him passed out in the street. She drove him to the hospital and called to let me know. I frantically drove to the hospital and when I walked into his room, I felt sick. He was lying there pale as a ghost, very lethargic, shaking like a leaf with IVs in him. The doctor said that they were going to admit him for seventy-two hours because he kept mumbling that he wanted to die. My heart broke in two.

When I arrived home, I started researching treatment centers. I even went as far as emailing Dr. Phil but to no avail. What I did find out actually surprised me. Unless you hold a certain type of insurance, you are required to pay per day after a 30-day inpatient stay. I knew that this would not be long enough. The bottom line is this: If you do not have the money, and I mean a lot of money, you cannot get the treatment you need to beat this addiction.

We have now been dealing with this for three years. Five other friends have passed away, and many have been incarcerated. My son is living in what is called a "sober home" and has maintained two months of sobriety. I have hope now. I also have hope that one day, very soon, our health system (and society as a whole) wakes up. Changes need to be made so that the people who really need help can receive it, wealthy or not. In the blink of an eye, a family's life can be forever changed . . . even yours.

~ Jackie Hollis

Unforgettable Love

I am not that good of a writer and never wrote anything before until today. I hear that when you write from your heart that's when you do your best and so here I go...

It all began on August, 2010. It was the 28th to be more specific.

The first time I saw you I was at the club and there you were, just across the dance floor from me by the corner. I stared at you for quite a while, and I said to myself, "She is not for your body." You were wearing a red dress that I will never forget. Guys came from every direction just to ask you for a dance, and you turned down every single one. Then, I looked at you from in the crowd, and you looked at me as well. I never saw you before, but from that moment I could swear that I knew you all my life. Then, I decided to make my move. I walked slowly across the dance floor while you were looking at me. I was afraid to ask you to dance but when I got close to you, you smiled at me. I knew I belonged by your side, and without a doubt I asked you to dance. The first words I heard from your mouth were "I would love to dance." Then we danced all night long. No words needed to be said. Just dancing was all that mattered to us.

We talked about dancing the next night before I left to go to Florida for a vacation. I said goodbye and learned your name was Tina. That's all I knew that night and nothing more.

The next night, I went to the club so excited that I might see you again. What a surprise when you were there. I was happy until I found you were with another man, and it broke my heart.

I left that night for three weeks and you were on my mind all the time. I couldn't explain why because you had a man. I guess I got into your life just a little too late. I had millions of questions to ask you and no answers. Time went by so fast.

One month later, I went back to the place where I first saw you, hoping that you would be there again. On September 28th I got to the club door, opened it, and you were just leaving with a friend. I said, "hi," and you said, "hello." I asked if you were leaving and you said you would be right back. You asked me to wait for you, and so I did. I asked about your day, and you said your grandpa had died. I felt terrible and tried to comfort you. That night, I asked all the questions I had from before, and you answered all of them. We danced again, and all your pain went away. I got your phone number, and you had mine. After I got home I texted you good-night.

The next day, I lost my cell phone, and I was mad because I didn't have any way to contact you. I waited hoping you would contact me. Three days later you texted me. We had our official first date.

On October 23, 2010, we went to the park. You made our wings bracelet, and I asked you to be my girl. November 15th was your birthday, and I threw a party only for us. There were flowers, chocolates, presents, and dinner at your house. You were the happiest girl on earth and so was I. On our first holiday together we went skiing at Perfect North. On December 24th life was good. On Valentine's Day, I worked all day and at 11pm I got home. What a surprise you had for me. We had dinner and a movie together for the first time.

Life is not perfect. Neither are we, and so we had our ups and down like anyone else, but we overcame them. Our relationship became stronger as the days went by. We celebrated every month, but when our one-year anniversary came, we had the biggest celebration ever. Movies at the theater, dinner at a restaurant, and I bought you roses as usual.

We were full of happiness. You had wonderful plans for us and, as always, you asked my permission for everything. I remember one day you came home from work so stressed out. I tried to calm you down and told you everything was going to be OK as long as we were together. Nothing else mattered. But then you

said this, "I'm tired of working and I want to go back to school. What do you think?" I said, "If that makes you happy, then do it." I asked you what you wanted to study and your answer was "I want to be a pharmacist just like my grandfather." You started studying hard to get into pharmacy school. Day and night you were studying and trying to finish homework and barely sleeping. I was there with you, and you were doing great at school. I was so proud of you.

Two weeks before our second anniversary, I decided that I wanted to go back to school. I wanted to make you proud of me, as well, but I never told you. September 23rd was our second anniversary. September 24th was the big day for you. That day, you had your PCAT exam to get into pharmacy school. That day was my first day back to school. I didn't want to tell you that I started school because I wanted to surprise you that night after your exam. I did great at school that night, and I was so happy and excited to tell you the big news, but sadly I never got to share that moment with you. That day you died, and my whole world collapsed. I had no desire for life anymore because I felt like part of me had died.

Good friends of yours and mine were there for me to support me in my grief. It has been 3 months since then. January 1, 2013, I made a promise to myself that I will continue studying. I have been doing this since the day you left. Hopefully, one day, wherever you are, you will be so proud of me. I will always have you in my mind, heart, and soul. Our phrase will always remain even after death like the rings we had made for us. They say, "Tina & Tony por siempre." I loved you once, I love you still, and I always will....

~ Jose Magana

A Childhood Memory

When I was young, I went to my cousin's house. It was a very cold, snowy, and windy day. I had to walk. It was almost a blizzard out.

I think we had a snow day or something of that nature. Before I left the house, my grandmother told me to dress warm and to make sure that I had gloves. Well, of course, I was at the age when I said to myself, "I don't need gloves."

I stayed all day with my cousin and friends. We played cards and fooled around while the temperature outside kept dropping and the snow kept falling. It was getting late, and I started to walk home.

By the time I reached home, which seemed like it took forever, my hands were frozen. I mean literally frozen. I had a case of frostbite. My grandmother heard me come in the back door by this time.

She proceeded to rush me into the bathroom and ran a little cold water over my fingers and hands. She was wise and knew that she had to follow this procedure a little at a time; otherwise, my fingers and hands would have felt like they were on fire.

To this day, whenever the temperature starts dropping, my fingers go numb, and my thoughts turn to my grandmother.

~ Leonard H. Crookshanks

Love Unreturned

One day the love is burning
And the sail is yearning
Oh! To see the face of my beloved
Be strong, my heart – I can't rise above it
As deep as the bottomless sea
How deep is his love for me?

Oh, the horror of love unreturned
Cold ashes where a fire once burned
Alone, so lonely and drear
I shed an ocean of tears
The rejection so bitter and cold
Years of sorrow unfold

I have loved once, but never again
Grief engulfs me a million times ten
Alone, my heart echoes, alone
My life song sings its sad, sad tone
Fear lifts me up and carries me away
Down, down to an even darker day.

~ *Mary Beth Weaver
and Martha Troyer*

Women's Role in National Development

Napoleon Bonaparte once said, "Give me a good mother and I will give you a better nation." This statement alone signifies the importance of women's role in nation-building.

As mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters, women are an important part of society. Progress and prosperity depend on the active participation of women. Women are important to give birth to a new generation and thus, the quality of women's lives, health, and education is directly related to the prosperity and wellbeing of a growing society.

Developed countries provide enormous opportunities for women's development in every walk of life. In developed countries like the USA and Europe, women are taking part in the development of society as doctors, nurses, engineers, and social workers.

On the other hand, in underdeveloped countries women are subjugated by a male dominant society. To become a significant part of productive society, they have to go through countless hardships. Sometimes, their personal life is endangered just because they want to change their fate through education.

In Pakistan, a fourteen-year-old girl, a blogger and education activist who wanted to change her and other children's lives through education, was shot by cruel extremists who were against women's education. The whole civilized world responded to her loss and assured her that they were with her in her efforts. A United Nations fund was created in her name for the improvement of the quality of education for young children, especially for female students. This is a kind of gesture from the civilized world to form a uniform society that has equal opportunities for everyone.

I am personally a part of the Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE) system, an outstanding program that aims to provide opportunities for adult students, including females, to make a differ-

ence in their lives. This shows that the civilized world understands the importance of women's role in society and values the empowerment of women through education and protection of their civil rights. It is well understood that free, liberal, and educated women will not only stand on their own feet but will also contribute to the betterment of society.

~ *Naheed Akhtar*

Live, Laugh, Love

I love my family, but during my childhood my father was an alcoholic. At home, there were always fights, aggression and arguments, not enough money, and other difficulties. I never saw what a good relationship could be like between a husband and a wife, so it was hard to imagine it in my own life. This gave me a bad view of men and negative feelings toward them. I had low self-esteem.

I graduated from a university and worked hard, trying to reach success and good social status. My priority in life was to become self-sufficient and independent. I communicated with men, of course, but never let them come into my personal world.

Then I met Ron through the Internet. We were so happy communicating back and forth that we decided to meet. So, he came to see me in Russia, and we had a fun 2-week vacation together. Then, a couple of months after he left, I got sick and had to have surgery. Ron was very supportive of me the whole time. While recuperating at home, he stayed with me all day and all night online, while I was crying and moaning. That day, I realized that no matter where or how far away a person lives, if he is reliable and willing to do everything for you when you are in so much need, every day, through his actions, he shows his love and care. Now I am here in the U.S. with Ron.

My priorities have changed a lot. It no longer matters about my social status, where I live, or what I do. I am happy to be the wife of a man for whom the most important thing in life is family. I feel secure and loved.

This kind of relationship should happen once to everyone whether it takes two years or a century. He did not ask about my past. He does not care if I sometimes have a difficult character and he does not try to change me. He just sees in me the meaning of life. He is a husband, lover, and a friend. It all came so suddenly into my world, as if a light was switched on. Love simply finds you no matter how old you are. Everything comes in time, if you can wait.

My dad was not that person who I wanted him to be in my childhood, but I forgave him many years ago. During the last few months he has had three strokes. I pray that he will stay alive and get better. I hope so much that he will be able to see and love his grandbaby in the future.

~Lidia Fateeva

The Big Switch

When I was in fifth grade, I switched from an Amish parochial school to a public school. The change was difficult for me. At that time, my parents never really explained why they wanted my two younger siblings and me to change schools. Six of my older brothers and sisters attended the Amish school until 8th grade. I believe my parents thought I would get a better education at the public school.

This was an experience I will never forget. Nervous, with butterflies in my stomach, I saw the bus coming from a distance. “How will I do this? I don’t want to go!” were the thoughts running through my mind. The big, yellow bus came closer and closer, and finally came to a stop. I was used to walking to school. I had never been on a bus before. Taking that first step was probably one of the most dreaded steps I ever took. Entering into the bus, everybody looked at me because I was new. “Why, oh, why am I doing this?” I thought.

Entering the classroom, I was scared. Everything was so different: different people, different teacher, different books, and even subjects I had never studied. I had never learned Social Studies or Science. I was used to a one-room classroom with students of every grade and age. Now each grade was in one huge classroom. I could tell my new teacher had much more training than my young Amish teacher.

Lunch time was really different too. I used to always pack my lunch, but now I could go to a cafeteria. I didn’t really know where to sit. At the Amish school, we usually sat at our desks, or if weather permitted, we sat outside.

Leaving my new school after the first day was a relief for me, just knowing that Day One was over with! If only I didn’t have to ride the bus 45 minutes to get home. I kind of missed walking home.

Looking back, I realize that changing schools was for the best. I don't regret it. Some of those nervous feelings have come back since I started taking GED classes. However, the more I study and the more I learn, the happier I am to be here.

~ *Luella F. Choj*

Wisdom

My Changed Opinion

I was always the type of person with the opinion that “Words can’t solve anything. If you beat people bad enough, they will see things your way.” My way to solve a problem was always with my fists. I might be as dumb as a box of rocks, but I could fight, so talking things out was out of the question.

My opinion changed one day when this guy said something I didn’t agree with. When we got done fighting, he ended up in the hospital and I took off. I felt bad because I thought he was dead. I watched the news, read the newspapers, and did everything that I could to find out if he was still alive. About three months later, I ran into him. I apologized, and we started talking. We ended up having a good conversation.

I went home and told my stepmother what was going on. She replied, “Son, you’re getting older, stronger, and wiser. If you beat him up, he will still think the same. If you share opinions, research your argument, and talk to him without being violent, then you’ll be able to come to an understanding.” I went to his house and asked if we could talk. He let me in. We started talking, and I told him my opinion. He sat back in a daze and said, “You know, that’s a good point. I didn’t see it that way.”

After that day I realized my brains are in my head and not in my fists and if I think before I react, things will be better in the long run. Since I have grown, my opinion is... before blowing up and losing your cool, think and talk about it and if you still can’t persuade them, then do some research.

~ Todd C. Grimes

Handwriting

Handwriting shows a bit of your personality

Are you a boy or girl? Just learning to write, or are you already advanced?

Nouns, verbs, adjectives -- so many things we can write.

Dramas, novels, short stories; you don't need a computer for that.

Write! Not just type!

Ready to try?

It can be practiced and improved.

The handwriting shows how you feel. Are you happy? Angry? Sad?

Initials, signatures, letters or notes—

Nothing can beat a handwritten thing.

Greetings, postcards, and much more – is what are people looking for.

~ *Michaela Preiss*

I Remember a Time When I Was a Child

I remember a time when I was a child. My family was making the trip across country from Oregon to Ohio. We had to travel through the mountains of Wyoming. My aunt, mom, grandmother, brother, and I were traveling in our maxi van.

I recall we were traveling up a very large mountain. When we got to the top of the mountain there was a bad snowstorm. The cross winds were so strong they were blowing vehicles off the highway. The wind caught our van when we got too close to the edge of the highway, and we started tumbling down the side of the mountain. Over and over again we went, until we got to the bottom of the mountain.

It's a good thing we had a CB radio in the van to call for help. We could hear truck drivers calling on the CB radio saying "whoever is in the van are you okay?" My grandmother radioed them back and said, "We are a little fluffed up, but otherwise we are doing OK."

The police officers said if it wasn't for the two by fours in the inside structure of the van it would have crumbled like a tin can.

After we were rescued, the U-Haul trailer we were towing would not stay hooked to our van. So my grandmother decided to use a whole roll of duct tape to hold the trailer to the van. We drove all the way back to Ohio that way. In fact, U-Haul in Ohio could not believe it stayed on the hitch traveling that far.

So the lessons I learned are to have a CB radio, have a sturdy vehicle wherever you go, and remember that you can use duct tape for just about anything.

~William D. Dalton

Most Times I Forget

Most times I forget
how to be grateful for the simple things I have.
It is easy to get caught up
in all the ugly things that happen to us.
We have to remember
that we only can control ourselves
and appreciate what we do have,
even when it's not enough of what we want,
but it's everything we need.
Your perspective is a lot of your attitude,
and your attitude will control your thoughts,
and your thoughts will control you.

~ *Kashena Violet*

My Daughter, the Matchmaker

When my daughter, Jackie, was eleven years old, we went to the beach in Mexico. I gave Jackie strict instructions not to talk to the other guests, but she began to talk to a man who was not a guest – he was an employee of the hotel.

Soon Jackie and the man were laughing, having swimming races in the pool and in general having a great time. I did not notice any of this because I was swimming in the pool. Only later did I realize that she had talked to a stranger.

After a while, the man came up to me and began to chat. Jackie was still in the water. I had no idea who this man was. I decided to go back to our hotel room to escape. I called Jackie, and as we left, the man said he would be at the hotel for the next few days. He invited me to dinner.

I said no. I was a single mom at the time, but I told him I was waiting for my husband. That is always a good way to get rid of a man who can't take "no" for an answer.

After that, I started seeing him every time I turned around. He was in the restaurant when we ate. He was at the store when we were shopping. He was at the pool when we were swimming. He was everywhere – always courteous, but always THERE.

And he always was trying to talk to me. He told me my daughter looked exactly like me. He said my daughter was a delightful child. That is when Jackie realized that the man she had talked to at the swimming pool was always around.

She asked, "Why is he everywhere we go?" I said, "It's your fault. I told you not to talk to strangers." She said, "No, you told me not to talk to the other guests."

Things came to a head one night. Jackie and I had a table reserved for a special Valentine's Day dinner. I sent her to get a

beverage, and when she returned, the man was behind her. He sat down without an invitation and proceeded to give Jackie some small gifts. We finished our dinner as quickly as possible. Then the man went to get something to drink. While he was gone, we fled the restaurant and went back to our room very carefully, as though someone was following us.

The next day we left. When we checked out, the clerk handed us a note from the man who wouldn't leave us alone. It contained his address and phone number. He really expected me to contact him. Some people just can't take "no" for an answer.

What Jackie learned: Don't talk to strangers.

~ *Gabriela Martinez*

Sad Eyes

Sad eyes see grey skies
And they see that real eyes, realize real lies.
Letting go but will not show
The dark they see beyond the snow.
Hold on tight, and don't let go.
Keep it in, so they won't know.
The truth you hide behind those lies
Will be seen through grey skies.

~ *Destiny Lowe*

If Only You Could Imagine What I Dream

Have you ever tried to break away from today's troubles? Have you ever tried to achieve peace of mind? You could do both if you entered my dreams and saw the world as I dream it could be.

Imagine a world where there are no cars, trains, and phones.

Imagine a place deep in a valley where there are no drugs or sickness of any kind.

Imagine a place where you will find peace and beauty against a light-blue sky.

Against this backdrop of beauty, you will see billowing clouds floating by pure and as white as newly fallen snow. You will see the sun at its peak, grass, green as if blanketed by a carpet of emeralds, all surrounded by wild flowers in bloom. You could actually enjoy the smell of violet and lavender in the air.

That is not all you would see. There are dogwood trees in bloom. Maple and oak trees are full of life's energy. In my dreams, birds fly high and free; squirrels and raccoons chat endlessly while they frolic in the woods.

The most magical part of my dream is that it does not end when I wake. I just walk to my front porch and I continue to dream of this peaceful world as I watch a close-by stream with bluish-green water running over rocks.

As I see this magical setting against a backdrop of rolling meadows, I sit in awe, seeing what God has created. I am always thankful that I can capture the beauty of this world as I dream of what it could be.

~ Bobby Litteral

Motivation

Learning English

Learning English is important to me.

Early in the morning I get up to study English.

American people always speak quickly. I can't really understand what they mean.

Remembering new vocabulary is hard for me, because I always forget.

Night time is very quiet. I try to remember the vocabulary.

I invite friends to come to my home to discuss grammar that the teacher taught today.

Nervousness always affects me when communicating with people.

Good memory can come through hard work and lots of practice.

English is my second language, and I am so scared of it.

Notebooks help to write lots of new words, so I can review every morning.

Good students always study hard.

Lonely life makes me homesick.

Introducing myself in English makes me nervous.

Singing English songs is my first step to speak.

Hanging English word cards on everything helps me learn new vocabulary.

~ Kuo Ching Chao

Goal

Growing in my **O**wn world of dreams,
That separates me from the rest of the world,
Helps me have an **A**ttitude,
That **L**eads me to success.

~ *Rashmi Binjawadagi*

My Thoughts

Years ago on a family trip to the Statue of Liberty, we read these moving and powerful words:

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses
yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your
teeming shore. Send these, the homeless tempest-tost
to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door.”

Nov. 2, 1883 - Emma Lazarus - Statue of Liberty

These are more than mere words. These are the dreams and hopes -- the reason people leave their homelands and settle in the United States, whether in the 1800s, 1900s, or 2013.

I would like to give thanks to all the American people for granting me the opportunity to live the American Dream – those who helped me become successful and even those who did not want to see me meet my goals in this country.

As a relatively new American originally from Colombia, I am grateful for the opportunity to learn, encourage others, and serve this country. It is a challenging endeavor.

The degree of compassion that is shown to immigrants who are frightened because they are still unable to understand English well, and unsure of what the future holds, is remarkable.

Since I have been in this country, I have learned that America is truly the land of opportunity for all. I see that as we embrace diversity, we become stronger as we better understand one another.

I am very, very proud to call myself an American/Colombian.

~ Teresa Guerrero

The Fight of a Soul

The secrets of a soul
are now to be told.
And lo and behold
there's a heart so cold;
weathered and old,
afraid to be bold,
with dreams of a love
to have and to hold
as light becomes dark
and day becomes night.
It seems that these dreams
are far from sight.
The darkness fades
and back comes the light,
and still are the wishes
that one day it just might.
Knowing the future
is bound to be bright,
the soul won't give in
without a fight.

~ Heather D. Canter

The Benefits of Investing in Your Education

Investing in your future starts with investing in yourself, and that starts with a good education. Just like investing with money, the earlier you start, the brighter your future and the bigger the rewards.

The benefits of a good education are many: a more well-rounded view of the world, improved employment opportunities and earning potential. However, I believe the greatest benefit you can receive is the pride and self-satisfaction you will gain from achieving your goals. Also if your motives are financial, statistics show people with more education often earn more money over their lifetimes. This could be extremely helpful when it comes to raising children and planning for their education costs and for your retirement. With each new challenge we face and conquer, we raise our levels of self-confidence. With this new confidence, comes the knowledge that you have the ability to handle yourself well in any social or economic environment.

A good education says a lot about who you are. It says that you are able to commit yourself to achieving your goals and that you want to do something with your life. It displays to others that you have the ability to focus on something for an extended period of time that requires overcoming challenges and managing your time wisely. You tell potential employers, coworkers, and colleagues that you can bring value to their team by way of your skills and education. These people know what it takes to get a good education, and the fact that you have one will tell them something about you. It's never too late to start the journey to a better education; however the earlier you start, the sooner you can enjoy the benefits of all your hard work.

Education teaches you the value of discipline. In order to achieve the benefits of this education you will have to learn to manage your time wisely and plan your days accordingly. You will need to be in class at specific times and turn in assignments at specific times. You will need to make time for study and research

all while managing the rest of your life, free time, time with family, and maybe even work.

A great education gives you the ability to increase the opportunities to do what you want with your life. Most people work in careers or jobs they really don't like. Getting a good education gives you the control of your life to do what you choose, where you choose, and to some extent how much you choose to do it for. Being able to retire early or change careers in later years is all made more possible by the benefit of a good education. The greatest rewards come not from instant gratification but from sustained effort and hard work.

~ *Mike Roberts*

My Teacher

The time she spends
Each class to help us learn
As she helps us study for our GED
Cheers us on to do our best
Her enthusiasm keeps us motivated
Every goal she has is to help someone
Rather than just looking out for herself

May we say she is a busy lady
As she races around trying to satisfy everyone
Relax is the last thing on her mind
If you have questions
Ask and she will be right there to help you
Never doubt yourself as you study
Nothing is impossible
Ending my little poem, I want to express my thanks to
Marianne for all she has done for us.

~ Dorothy A. Coblenz

Importance of the Family

For some people, family doesn't matter. I believe being a family member does indeed outweigh any challenges in my life. My decision to go back to school is proof of that statement. If I didn't get the moral and financial support of my husband and the help I needed from my parents to watch and care for my kids, I probably would not have overcome the challenges.

When I decided to go back to school, I had to resign from my work, because my school schedule didn't allow me to keep my job. My husband picked up two jobs to be able to support us and also pay for my tuition. I didn't have to worry about the bills, food, or even clothes. He always managed to provide us with everything we needed.

School started to be more and more difficult, with lots of homework and tests. Sometimes the kids got sick. I was so overwhelmed, I started to wonder if I would be able to make it. Then my husband assured me that everything would be just fine. He told me a story about his grandfather who could not even read the newspaper and who went back to school at the age of 58. He beat all the odds and graduated. Later, he opened up his own business and became the best hardware seller in their town. His story taught me that I can overcome anything, if I put my mind into it.

My parents also stepped up to help with the kids. They care for them while I am at school. They take the kids to their doctor's appointments. The best part of it all is when they keep the kids some weekends just so I can get some quality time with my husband. My parents help every step of the way.

Going back to school was a big step for me. My husband's financial and moral support made it possible. My parents helped with the kids every time I needed them. They guided me my whole life and are still guiding me with my own family. My family is my rock. So, to me, being a family member does outweigh the challenges of life.

~ Sally Sylla

Locked into Life

Locked in, boxed in,
my breath is leaving me.
Hold tight,
all night,
doctors let me be.
No more needles,
no more time,
spent from family.

Locked in, boxed in,
I'm back at home,
still can't roam.
My lungs are failing me.

Locked in, boxed in,
nightmares still plague me.
Tears fill my eyes,
I cannot hide
this sickness inside me.

Locked in, boxed in,
school becomes my hell.
All friends are gone,
They've moved on.
I want to scream and yell.

Locked in, boxed in,
life takes its twists and turns.
I meet a man.
He holds my hand and
my heart begins to burn.

Locked in, boxed in,
a baby now in me.
I'm now a mother,
I cannot hover.

I'm now a wife.
This is my life.
I'm as happy as can be.

Locked in, boxed in,
my dad is dying.
I would be lying
if I said it did not bother me.
My dad is gone.
Oh how I long
to see his smiling eyes.
My heart is torn.
I'm so forlorn,
I cannot even rise.

Locked in, boxed in,
two babies now in me.
Oh thank you God,
I can't believe
you've made me so happy.
Days turn dark.
Oh God my heart
you've taken them from me.

Locked in, boxed in.
Time is now my hell.
Each day that's passed,
my heart feels trashed.
The pain begins to swell.

Locked in, boxed in,
four years gone by.
I cannot lie;
time is now my friend.
My heart is healing,
Now I am dealing,
and I know this is not the end.

Growth

What Is Green?

Should you find a Faerie Faun flitting through the forest, and should you ask her, "What is green?" and should you find yourself lucky enough to keep her attention for more than a moment before she fled, she might tell you. Should you be lucky enough to find your way out once more, without falling prey to Faerie pranks, which are frequently fatal, you could tell us...

Green is the color of life.

Green is the whole of what we see, in our time, which passes before your brief, mayfly eyes like the stately march of the oak tree.

Green is running through a verdant forest, the branches slapping at rosy round cheeks.

Green is the woolen cloak of a hunter, snagged on a thorny branch, chasing a frightened Faerie Faun.

Green are the arrows he fires, speeding by to pierce hollowly into trees, narrowly missing the fleeing prey, but wounding fair dryads.

Green is the glade we burst upon, panting and gasping like lovers entwined in illicit embrace.

Green filters the light falling through the leaves, casting the forest in emerald shades.

Green and red flies the next arrow, grazing my golden, glistening flesh.

Green as a flash I flee, swifter than any flying, flitting Faerie or puckish Pixie on the wing.

Green drips the gentle rain, gilding the gossamer webs and leaves like fine embroidery on a lady's gown.

Green comes the wicked hunter, jealous oaken bow strumming once more, boots of black a-pounding.

Green goes the pounding of our hearts, a leather drum beating to the sound of my boot-black hooves.

Green and aching plays the music of the chase, the drums, the quick syncopated beat of our feet; the pounding of our hearts; the violent, vibrant viola that is his bow.

Green and gleaming I go, a riotous splash of red trailing in my
wake, drops of ruby sparkling as they sprinkle the leaf-
strewn ground.

Green is the whisper of my passing, as I slyly slip into the slimy,
silken carpeting.

Green are the leaves that lend me cover, beguiling foolish, foul
mortal hunter.

Green is the color of the goat horn flute I raise to my flaming,
flushing face.

Green flow the notes into the wood, into the wind, into the bab-
bling brook and the wily hunter's weary ears.

Green as the growing grass he goes, fainting fast to fall upon the
velvet, vibrant moss.

Green, it rises to surround him, enveloping him in its verdant
grasp.

Green is the sound of his passing, a last gasping breath that trills
out.

Green shall he stay, forever, in this Faun and Fae filled forest.

After all... Green is the color of life.

~ *Christopher Stanley*

My Garden

Everyone has a place that is special. My special place is my garden. It has many qualities that I enjoy that make it special.

My garden has a sense of God's presence that makes it peaceful and quiet. I watch things grow that God uses to enhance my life, such as vegetables to nourish my body and help me to grow as the plants do.

It feels like a special place when I cut flowers and put them in the house and every time I see and smell them, it reminds me of the joy they bring. My favorite flowers are daffodils and daisies. I place them on the kitchen sink and around the house.

When I work in my garden, it renews my spirit like it renews the plants that I grow. When I pull the weeds or fertilize the plants, it brings healthier and more beautiful vegetables and flowers to my garden. As I prepare the ground by enriching the dirt, it enriches my life.

My garden is a special place to me because it renews my spirit by sitting in the peace and quiet, watching the vegetables and flowers bring happiness to my life. My garden is a special place to go and enjoy the fruits of my labor.

~ Gary Blankenship

Freedom from Drugs

I was just a child when you took a hold of me,
 Stuck in fear and pain.
 And from that first time I met you, I knew
 that it was never going to be the same.
I had fallen in love, and there was no turning back.
 With you I could go into my own world
 and escape from that life I had feared.
 It all started out with me wanting you,
 Then it turned into craving you,
 Which led me to needing you.
 Once it came to that point, I didn't want to live
 and felt that I couldn't escape.
You had taken everything from me, all because I let you.
 You got me to believe your lies,
 Lies that made me sick, crazy, and alone.
 Making me feel that I couldn't do it without you.
 Living without you was like living without air.
 I would tell myself everything was going to be OK,
As I fell to my knees crying, grasping for each breath,
 With a pain in my chest,
and that feeling like my heart was coming to an end.
I looked up to the sky as I asked for one last breath,
 Just long enough to say,
"GOD, I surrender. I can't take this being a slave any longer."
 As I closed my eyes, I saw the brightest light.
At that point, I knew my prayers had been answered.
 I wouldn't have to feel that pain again.
 Now that I am a survivor,
 I can be someone who is going to help another.
With this freedom I have been given, I have the opportunity now.

~ Nichole Keene

The Cat's Paw

Some people may think this sounds a little cruel, but this is what happened.

I live in the country. Every once in a while, an old feral tomcat comes around, and he'll stay for a couple of days. I'm not a cat person, but I can't help tossing him some table scraps when he's around. A couple of weeks ago I noticed the old tomcat was hopping. Something was wrong with his front paw. He wouldn't let me get close to him, but I could tell from a distance that his left paw was twice the size of the others. The paw was bleeding. Seeing it, I realized this cat was going to die a very painful and drawn-out death. Knowing this, my first thought was, I'm going to have to shoot this cat. Not having room in the budget for a veterinarian bill, I thought this was the most humane thing to do.

I went into the house and brought out my rifle. I found him in the backyard, sitting on a tree stump. I raised my rifle and sighted him through the scope. The scope on the rifle allowed me to get a better look at his paw. I noticed what was causing his pain. One of the trees that I cut down for firewood is called a honey locust. Some people call them thorn trees. In his paw was a giant thorn. I had noticed the cat hunting mice in the wood pile a lot, but I never thought this would happen. I felt a little responsible.

I got an idea. I ran my rifle back into the house and came back with a blanket. I cornered the cat at the side of the house. I arranged his paw so it was poking out from the blanket. By this time, the old tomcat was fighting for his life, biting and hitting through the blanket and making noises I never heard come from a cat. The thorn was bloody and had pus all over it. I pulled out my handkerchief, grabbed the thorn, and it came right out. I lifted the blanket, thinking this tomcat was going to be very upset with me. But he just laid there on the ground, whining and exhausted. By this time he was no longer trying to get away.

That was a week ago. Today, he is looking a lot better. I think he's going to make it. As far as I know, the ol' tom has eight lives left.

~ Dale E. Greene

Reflections

I have high hopes
Of a life without dope
So confused of what to do
And no one to turn to.

I don't know how long this will last
Wish I could let go and put it in the past
I continue to beat myself down
My excuse is always this town.

My daughter is my motivation
The most beautiful inspiration
I hope she sees I'm trying to change
So many thoughts I need to rearrange.

I have new goals to make
For me and my family's sake
Learn a new way of thinking
So my life stops sinking.

Right now my back's on the wall
It's time to be a man and stand tall
No matter how much wrong I've done
There's always still time to correct it all.

~ Jared Smith

Shea's Dream

As Shea stepped onto the train, she started remembering what got her there. Five years earlier she had decided it was time for her to make a change in her life. She had decided to go back and get her GED. It had been five years since she had been out of school and she was pretty nervous about embarking on this new endeavor. Shea had to drop out of school at 16 years old to help her mother take care of their family. Her father had been diagnosed with cancer and was no longer able to work. She had worked as a waitress full time to help her mother put food on the table and pay bills.

Shea's family was already barely getting by before her dad had got sick. She grew up in a small town in Alabama as an only child. Her mother worked at a local florist and her dad was a handyman. There was not much in this town. People dreamed of making it big and moving away. Shea had always wanted to be in marketing. While she was still in high school she was always involved in different ways to get her classmates to raise money for dances or for new gym equipment.

When Shea found out about her dad's colon cancer, he was already in stage four. Her mother tried to take care of her dad, work, and still keep up with the bills. One night Shea heard her mother crying on the phone, begging the water company not to turn off their water. Shea sat down at the kitchen table with her mom and cried with her. She told her mom that she was going to drop out of high school and get a job somewhere. Although her mom didn't want this for her, she knew she had no choice. Her mother and father made her promise that she would go back and get her GED, then go to college.

Shea got a job as a waitress at a local diner that all of her classmates hung out at called, "Melts." It was hard for Shea to overhear her friends' and fellow classmates' conversations about what was going on at school. After two months of being at "Melts," Shea's father passed away. She continued to work there to help her mother pay off all the medical bills.

About five years later, everything was paid off. Both Shea and her mother had new jobs at a factory called W.W.M. that made floor mats for offices. They loved the pay and were even able to save some money in the three years that they worked there. Shea liked going to work with her mother and working alongside her. Her mother always said to Shea, "Just think if you would go back to school, you could be ordering one of these floor mats for your own office instead of making them for other people." Shea was 21 years old and thought it was too late for her to start pursuing her dream. When Shea's boss came to her to ask about different ways to get stores to buy from W.W.M., she knew her mother was right. So the very next day, Shea enrolled in classes to prepare her for the GED test.

Passing the GED happened pretty quickly for Shea. After only 3 months of classes, she passed the test on her first try. Everyone was so excited for Shea! Shea knew that nothing was going to stand in the way of her dream. She continued working at W.W.M. and helped her boss come up with new ideas to market the floor mats. That summer she spent as much time as she could with her mother and friends before starting school that August.

The next two years were busy for Shea. She worked full time at W.W.M. and went to school full time for marketing, but she earned her degree in marketing. She was nervous about finding a job in the marketing world. One day during a lunch break at work, her boss called a mandatory meeting in the middle of the plant. Shea was so nervous; she thought that they might be getting ready to close their doors since most factories in that area never kept their doors open for more than a year or two, but W.W.M. had been there for five years.

Shea's boss, Jackson, started telling everyone about how well the company was doing. He said that the company's headquarters were getting ready to open two new plants in the U.S. He also wanted to congratulate Shea on earning her marketing degree. Jackson said he was going to miss Shea and all of her help, but she would be leaving in two weeks. Everyone's jaw dropped! They could not believe what they were hearing! Shea, getting fired?

Jackson had a smile on his face and said, "Shea, I would assume that after busting your butt for five years working here and going to college full time for the past two years you would want to move to New York and be on the board of marketing for W.W.M.?" Everyone was clapping and cheering for Shea! Shea and her mother were crying tears of joy. Jackson walked over to Shea and her mom and said, "Seriously, the job is yours if you want it. The big guys are expecting you in two weeks." Shea jumped into his arms and said, "Thank you SO much, Jackson! Of course, I will take the job!"

Shea decided after all that she had been through, she really could use a break. She decided to take the train to New York City. Shea arrived at her new apartment right above a little ma and pa shop late on a Friday evening. It left a lot to be desired. The only room that was separate and had a door was the bathroom. She didn't care though. She knew Monday morning her new life was waiting for her. She had spent the weekend unpacking, sight-seeing, and getting ready for her first day at work Monday.

At the age of 33, just ten years after arriving to New York, Shea stood out on her balcony sipping a glass of white wine. She had thought about those past ten years and how far she had come. She had made Vice President of the company in just a short 3 years. She had bought a penthouse that you could see the Statue of Liberty from. She had a wonderful husband that she met a few weeks after moving to New York.

Shea knew that she would probably still be either waiting tables or making floor mats if she had not earned her GED and gone on to college. She had thought for years that this GED was just a silly piece of paper. She never knew how far it would actually get her in life. The life she was living was a life that she had dreamed of. Even though Shea lives very well, she never forgets where she came from.

Ohio Snowflakes

In my mind lives an Ohio snowflake.
It freezes my memories of tropical beaches and awakens
My Brazilian heart, which is now a wonderful huge lake.
Its name is Erie and, surrounded by cold winds, it does not wake.
It's teaching me to love its people and the winter that is not fake.
While I see through my window the falling snow, its gentleness makes
A change inside me. I am reborn as a blessed person, awakened
To this new land, willing to fight for it, and for its sake.

~ Ana Anciães

Inspiration

My Inspiration

My inspiration is my daughter Angie. She is the youngest of my three children, my only girl. She is 32 years old with three children of her own. Angie is a single parent. She was a Licensed Practical Nurse at Wooster Community Hospital in Wooster, Ohio, until she was struck down with Multiple Sclerosis.

Since my daughter can no longer work as a nurse due to her health issues, everyday is a challenge for her. The M.S. causes her white blood cells to reproduce rampantly and causes blood clots and tumors, so she has to take chemo treatments. Sometimes she has seizures. She has to have her cell phone close by at all times. If my daughter has a seizure and wakes up finding herself on the floor, she can call for help on her cell phone.

One incident happened when she went down to the basement of my house to check her laundry while I was in the kitchen preparing dinner. My cell phone started to ring. It was my daughter, and I asked her why she was calling me when she was in the house. Angie commented, "Well, Mom, I'm on the basement floor and just wanted to see what the world looks like from the lower level. Now could you please help me get up?" This is one of the examples of how she deals with her situation with humor.

Angie's day consists of getting up in the mornings, going to her chemo treatment, then returning back home to bed until her strength builds back up. Her heart is weak from all her treatments, so her exercise is minimal. Through all this her communication has mostly been on cell or computer. She can still help her children with their homework. She is always encouraging someone on Facebook, whether it is a friend or family member, with whatever challenges they are facing. No matter how gloomy a person is, my daughter can walk into the room, and it's like a huge ray of sunshine appears and uplifts your heart. She is my daughter, my best friend, my inspiration.

A Tribute to My Grandfather

In this journey through life, we encounter many people. Some people move on and are soon forgotten; others leave behind them a trail of deeply embedded footprints that is meant to be followed, a life meant to be reflected in generations to come. When I think of a figure of such character, I can't help but remember my Grandpa.

He wasn't much to look at with his tattered, wool hat always a little dusty, and his barnyard pants a little too worn. His face wasn't characterized by smooth handsome features; instead, there were deeply engraved lines that told of a life, not of bubbles and rainbows, but one of hardship and muscle. He was a member of an Old Order Amish church in rural, northeastern Ohio, and though he practiced a very conservative lifestyle, he never pushed his beliefs on anyone else.

He wasn't one to give gifts. In fact I don't believe I ever received a present from him, not the wrapped kind that is. What I did receive was inspiration to live a life of integrity and courage, and that went far beyond any Fisher Price toy or frilly, cotton dress.

I remember with clarity the times I helped him with the little mill in the old lean-to shanty that stood beside the buggy shed. He would grind grains of wheat or kernels of corn to make whole wheat flour, graham flour, corn meal, and cereals. Every customer was greeted with a jovial "Howdy-Do!" and treated with utmost courtesy and respect. I would help him weigh and bag the orders of flour, and he would always tell me to make sure I gave a little more than people asked for. "It's just the right thing to do," he would say with a shrug. His quaint little business never gave him a hearty bank account, but he was always content with enough. I never heard him complain.

I don't remember him ever telling me he loved me, but it never occurred to me that he didn't. Although words are nice, it

just wasn't his way. The way he gave up his time so willingly and unselfishly gave no room to doubt his love.

Every winter takes me back to those blustery, cold mornings when Grandpa would come walking over to our house in his slow, lumbering gait and ask in his amiable way, "Anyone want a ride to school?" My siblings and I would respond with cheers and gales of laughter for the mile-long trek to our one-room schoolhouse always seemed so much farther in the snow and bite of winter. We would watch as he hitched his trusty horse to the old black sleigh with its left runner slightly awry and paint coming off here and there. There were no bells jingling and no ribbons streaming, but oh the fun we had piling on and heading for a field of billowy white with poofs of snow flying from the horse's hoofs and feeling like the luckiest children in the world. Grandpa didn't care that he could still be enjoying the warmth of his kitchen stove or drinking another cup of tea; instead, he was doing what he could to help. We would meet up with some of our less fortunate friends who were braving the snow on their feet and Grandpa would always stop, and amidst gleeful shouts and hysterical giggles everyone would find a spot and off we'd go again. The clanging dong of the eight o'clock bell would be heard as Grandpa skillfully drove the horse and sleigh with all its passengers to the little, brick schoolhouse top of the hill. I would jump off with a wave good-bye and be so proud that this local "hero" was my Grandpa.

The music sounding from the little mill has long been paused, and the old black sleigh is buried beneath an accumulation of what the years left behind. Grandpa's name will never be read in history books, and his image will never be portrayed in any Hall of Fame, but the legacy he left behind will always be remembered in the hearts of every one who knew him.

~ Marilyn B. Troyer

The Unsinkable

I was born in 1912, a ship unsinkable, steadfast and built to last, beautiful, glamorous, with millions spent; also fully staffed and equipped.

People believed I was above all the rest, and they couldn't sink me.

With my elegance of crystal, trimmed in gold, everyone was sold – sold by the fact that I am unsinkable.

So, they took a chance on me, the unsinkable, not knowing or realizing that I'm constructed from manmade materials, welded steel, painted together, and formed to bear any type of weather.

As I sit here with my plank open, people start boarding. Thousands with luggage, and heavy trunks that added extra pounds to my storage area. I'm getting heavier. It's adding to my 46,320 tons, so I'm probably weighing now over 50 tons.

“Click-clack.” I feel the pins and needles of people's shoes and wheels of trunks. Yet, I'm excited – this might be fun!

I, the Titanic, am now filled to capacity. My whistle is blowing. I pull up my anchor. My engine roars. Let's set course for the Atlantic shore.

With waters peaceful, clear and blue, we head out to sea. Everything is going smoothly.

Four days into the voyage, on Sunday, April 14, 1912, I hear a disturbance. It is dark, foggy and cold. I can't see what's about to unfold.

Someone yells, “There's an iceberg ahead.” Another voice yells, “Full speed ahead.”

No! Let's avoid this iceberg! Let's slow down instead!

I feel a pain that's so intense and sharp. I turn to the right, and still nothing in sight. In spite of the change in course, the iceberg is no match for me.

I try to avoid it – first left, then right. I can't maneuver. I try to fight. Not knowing the weather at night, this is a mess and a fright.

Oh my goodness, we hit with an impact. I collide with the iceberg. It's the loudest crack one ever heard. It hits my side. It hurts like hell. I feel icy cold water rushing inside, fast and furious.

I'm sinking quickly. I can't stay afloat, leaning on my side, and can't push water out. It's cold. It's dark in the middle of the ocean. I'm going down. I'm going to drown.

Then I give a sigh. Oh My God!

Who said I was unsinkable?

For I am sinkable ... right into the Atlantic Ocean I slide.

~ Andretta Allen-Owens

A Love to Remember

I felt the hardship of his passing along with sorrow, mental pain, and sadness. I felt this pain when my husband passed away. My heart is broken even though I know that he is with God and not with us. Even though I know this, I ask God why He had to take my husband away from me.

More and more, the children and I miss him. We were together for fifty-six years.

Every morning, I wake up and say to myself, "This is a bad dream." I ask him and God to help me every step of the way, each day, so that I will make it through.

When I talk to him and God, these are some thoughts I share with them: "I wish we had not done some things, and other things I wish we had done another way, knowing our time was passing. I wish we had done better while we were still together. I wish that I had done more. Now, I have to live without you. I carry the memory of our love in my heart, and I will cherish you as long as I live."

We miss you so, my husband. Please look after me and your children.

Even though you have been gone for a year, your death still seems like a bad dream. I miss you every day, more and more deeply.

My wish, my dear husband, is to guide your children toward a bright future. Every time I think of you, you are right here in my heart.

~ Masako Kuehmstedt

Pain

I have a son who is 5 years old. A few days ago, my son and I went to the dentist because he had a cavity and he needed a filling. The dentist gave him an injection of Novocain. During the treatment, he did not cry and he bore the pain well. But we had a problem after that. He could not feel anything because of the Novocain, so he was biting his lip to see how much pressure to apply before he would feel something. I told him the reason to stop biting, but he did not understand. He was too curious about the numb sensation.

After we arrived at home I was busy with many tedious chores, so I did not pay attention to my son. In the meantime, my son had been biting his lip and making it bleed. The next time I saw him he had injured his lip because he could not feel it. I was very upset with him and I blamed myself because I had not paid attention to him.

However, I realized something through this about pain. I had always wondered why God gave pain to human beings. In my view, if pain did not exist, humans would be happier. But when I saw my son bleeding and how he had unknowingly hurt himself, I realized that if people cannot feel any pain then they cannot protect themselves from dangerous situations.

Through this incident, I praised and thanked God for allowing pain.

~Youn Lee

My Successful Boss

The most successful person I know is my boss. He owns The Ashery, a bulk food store near Fredericksburg, Ohio. He is the kind of man you look at and think, "Wow, he's got everything! He must have done something right!"

So what is the secret behind his success? I believe it is his willingness to serve – to give of himself. How often I have heard him say, "The customer's the boss!" He is a giver, not a taker, and desires that for his employees as well.

An important quality that I see daily in him is generosity. He is definitely not stingy with giving out bonuses! How could a man be successful by never giving, just taking?

These are qualities that make my boss a success, but I think it all stems from his desire to glorify God. We pray together as a workforce, and he tells us over and over, "Our purpose here is to glorify God!"

I am privileged to work for a successful man. He is someone I can respect and learn from. He is someone who has God as his top priority, and consequently finds joy in serving others.

~ Mary Beth Weaver

My Mother, Precious Jewel

On November 5, 1996, God took my mother home with him. My mother was the most important person in my life. She was loving, kind, and generous. My mother never met a stranger. She would give you the shirt off her back and the shoes off her feet. She would give you a place to stay if you were homeless.

I remember one day the lady across the street was getting her lights cut off and my mother ran across the street with her checkbook in her hand. She asked the man how much the neighbor owed them, and they told her \$200. My mother wrote out a check for that amount. The lady said, "Thank you," but my mother said, "No thank you is needed. That's what people are for: to help each other when needed."

In her obituary, I wrote a poem. The name of it is *Precious Jewel*.

Precious Jewel

Mom, you're my precious jewel.
You were a good mother, friend, and
Your heart was always filled with love
for everyone who came in contact with you.

I'm so happy for all the years we had together.
You will always be in my heart.
And hopefully, one day I will see you with that beautiful smile.

R.I.P. Katherine P.Wilkes

"Love You,"
Gwen

~ Gwendolyn Miller

A Wonderful Man

For most people, the word “father” is simply the name of the man who is responsible for a child’s birth. Some, if not all, of the characteristics and traits of this man are naturally to love and care for his child.

Honestly, the word “father” is more to me than passing one’s DNA and physical traits – it is about love, values, sympathy, respect, and forgiveness. The ability for a man to instill all his great values into another person and polish faults will build a child up to be all that the child can be.

My story started in 1989, the year of my birth in El Salvador. Shortly afterward, my biological father left my mother to care for me on her own. In the following months to come, my mother had met a wonderful man and quickly fell in love.

With no hesitation, he asked my mother to marry him, telling her that he wanted to take care of her for the rest of his life and make a family with us. Even though I was not of his blood, he raised me as his own child.

Five years later, my mother and step-father had two other children, but he still treated and loved me as his very own. My memories of him as I was growing up are of happy thoughts and moments. He would take me everywhere with him. I remember the times he was teaching me to read and write and also the long hours we spent together reading the newspapers. And, my favorite of all memories, which comes to me every day when I put on my shoes – him teaching me how to tie my shoes, no matter how many times I did it wrong.

We were truly inseparable and spent lots of time together. People would always ask him, “Who is that little girl?” and he would proudly say, “She is my daughter.”

He treated me and my siblings fairly, with no special treatment or any type of favoritism. He was caring and giving, no matter the situation. His love for me was truly genuine, and I know he would do anything for me. One thing for certain, even if it was his last dollar, and I asked for it, he would gladly give it to me without any hesitation, and I know it was because he loved me dearly.

In 2005, a great opportunity came my way – to move to the United States. Even though I was very excited about this, it was very saddening for me as well. I will never forget the way the sun beat down on his wrinkled face, and his eyes glistened in sadness. His voice became shaky and it brought tears to my eyes.

I can still remember his last words before I left for America. He said, “Come here and give a hug to your old man.”

Ever since leaving home that day to come to the U.S., my heart has longed to see the wrinkles of his face and to hear the sound of his voice again. My life has changed since coming here, and he still manages to encourage me. We speak on the phone, and it is not the same, but he still motivates me with his words: “Even when the sky is dark, sooner or later the light will shine through,” he says.

Recent pictures of him show how time has passed. The wrinkles have deepened and time has taken its toll on the old man’s body. But his smile is still the same.

This is my old man; the man who has given everything for me. Even though we don’t share the same blood type and look completely different, to me he will always be my father.

Thanks to God, I’ve been blessed with a man to raise me, and to love me unconditionally. I’m hoping one day I get to see my father again. My father, my old man, the most wonderful man I’ve ever met.

Author Biographies

Glenda Aguilar – p. 33**Naheed Akhtar – p. 69**

Born in Islamabad, Pakistan, Naheed has lived in the U. S. for the past five years with her husband, Abdul. She has two young children and she is a student in the ESOL program in Wooster. She has earned a BA in Political Science and Economics, a BEd in Education, and an MA in Political Science.

Manal Alfaleh – p. 42

I'm from Syria and I have lived here 5 years. I have 3 kids.

Andretta Allen-Owens – p. 116**Ana Anciães – p. 109**

I'm Ana Anciães and I am married to Marcus Gay. I'm an administrator. I study at Madison High School - ABLE with Mrs. McCarty on Mondays and Wednesdays. I live in Madison, Ohio.

Donna Bell – p. 53

My name is Donna Bell and I am currently attending GED/ABLE classes at Buckeye Career Center in New Philadelphia, Ohio. I am a mother of four boys. "Dear Son" was written in memory of my son, James Walter Annon. My goal is to become a teacher for the deaf.

Jazmin M. Benton – p. 46

My name is Jazmin Benton. I am 24 years old and have four children. Ja'Niyah is 5, ZhiArah is 4, Deona is 3 and Damon Jr. is 1. I am currently working on getting my GED. I wrote this poem as a way to express my feelings.

Rashmi Binjawadagi – p. 88

Rashmi is currently living in Wooster, Ohio. She is from the city of Dharwad, Karnataka State, India. She has been living in the United States for the past twenty-one months. Her husband is doing research in the Food and Animal Health Research Program. She has a four-year-old son, and in India she received a Masters Degree in Analytical Chemistry.

Gary Blankenship – p. 101

Gary and his wife enjoy spending time with their three children and four grandchildren. Gary was born in Columbus, Ohio, and moved to the Cincinnati area 30 years ago. He has worked at Chromaflo Technologies for more than 27 years. In addition to gardening, Gary likes hunting and photography.

Paraschiva Bogdan – p. 23

I came to the USA in 2011 with my husband and I started a new life. Right now, I am attending school and working at Harry London Chocolate factory.

Heather D. Canter – p. 90

I am 19 years old and I am a depressed manic and borderline schizophrenic. I don't let the challenges of my disability hold me back and I fight for what I believe in. I always strive to do my very best.

Kuo Ching Chao – p. 87

I come from the beautiful island of Taiwan. Most Taiwanese people are friendly and humble. I love my home and learning English.

Luella F. Choj – p. 73

Luella Choj is from Apple Creek, Ohio. She is working on her GED at the ABE program at the Fredericksburg Library.

Dorothy A. Coblentz – p. 93

I live on our family farm near Fredericksburg, Ohio, and work at Weaver Leather. I am working on my GED.

Leonard H. Crookshanks – p. 67

I am just an ordinary, average guy trying to get my GED.

William D. Dalton – p. 79

I am working at Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission in the IT department as a College Intern. I am studying to become a Field Tech.

Hadami Elgabroun – p. 44

Hadami was born and raised in Tripoli, Libya. She graduated from Tripoli Dental College in 2008. She is happily married and currently expecting her first child. She loves exploring new places and cultures. She also enjoys baking and decorating cakes.

Heather Evans-Smith – p. 106

My name is Heather Evans-Smith and I am currently enrolled in GED/ABLE classes at Buckeye Career Center in New Philadelphia, Ohio. I am a stay-at-home mom to four children. My goal is to enroll at Kent State University this fall. I want to prove to myself and to my children that I can do it!

Lidia Fateeva – p. 71

I was born in Russia. In October 2012, I moved to the USA. In December 2012, I was married in a beautiful church to Ron. We dream of having a daughter and an orange kitten and living in a big house with a fireplace. We enjoy traveling and hope to see many countries of the world together.

Mindy Faulkner – p. 31

Mindy has been working on improving her writing skills for a long time. She started coming to the Literacy Council after trying several different places. Mindy loves to write and her dream is to help other students like her publish a book of stories and poems. Mindy is very grateful to her past tutor Sandy and her new one Rebecca as well as her husband Larry who tells her, "Mindy, you can do it."

Katie Felumlee – p. 55

Shirley Goslin – p. 43

Shirley has been in our program since Fall 2012. She is very determined to get her GED and she is headed in the right direction. Shirley enjoys writing.

Dale E. Greene – p. 103

Dale Greene lives in Jamestown, Ohio.

Todd C. Grimes – p. 77

I was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I've grown to love writing, especially when I found out it was easier to express myself through my writing. My life experiences have helped me to be creative and one day I hope I can communicate with people through my stories.

Teresa Guerrero – p. 89

I moved to the U.S. from Colombia. I currently work as a translator for the local hospital.

Silvana Guzzo – p. 49

My name is Silvana Veronica Guzzo. I was born on September 7, 1978, in Mendoza, Argentina. I have lived for 11 years in Columbus, OH, with my children and partner. I study at Eastland-Fairfield Career Center in an ESL program. My goal is to improve my English, and I would like to start and finish my GED. I'm so glad to receive this gift. Thank God for giving me a beautiful life!!!

Justina Hall – p. 3, 37

My name is Justina Hall and I am from Norwalk, Ohio. I am 25 years old and I have a 3-year-old son named Emree Macoy Hall. I have made mistakes in my life and I have always had to learn the hard way. By writing my poems, I get to share with people my life choices and I am hopeful that they can appreciate the experiences I have had and connect with any one poem. My feelings come to light when I write, so I write poems. I feel that with hard work, you will succeed. I would like to thank The Worth Center for giving me a chance to show the world who I am underneath this hard life.

Lisa A. Hamilton – Cover Artwork

Lisa A Hamilton was born June 24th, 1969. She was born and raised in Cincinnati Ohio, and is now a single mother of five; two daughters and three sons. She loves to draw and cook.

Jackie Hollis – p. 62

My name is Jackie Hollis. I have lived in Lake County all of my 45 years. I have four children and two grandchildren. I was employed at Case Western Reserve University and Case Comprehensive Cancer Center from 1995 to 2010 when my position was eliminated due to a loss of funding. This change in circumstance led me to Auburn Career Center and its ABLE program. I have always enjoyed writing. Thank you for this opportunity.

Shumei “May” Sheng Horvat – p. 27

My name is Shumei Sheng Horvat. “Internet Bride” is a true story of my life. I came from China in May of 2012 to marry my husband, Joel. With me, I brought along my teenage daughter, Ping. She is 17 years old and is in 11th grade. As for me, I studied English for three years while I was in middle school, but I never thought that I would learn it well enough to be able to speak it in my daily life. I also never thought that my writing would be selected to be used in this book. Before I moved to America, I was a Registered Nurse in China, so I hope I will be able to pass the nursing test here someday after my English has improved.

Denice Jones – p. 19

My name is Denice Jones and I am a 25-year-old woman. I was born in Cleveland, OH. When I was six, my mother moved to Atlanta, GA. When I was 17, we moved back to Cleveland in order to be with family. I love to read, write, and listen to music and also to travel. The reason that I love to write is that it is an outlet for me. Writing helps me to release my thoughts and feelings. If I have no one to talk to, I can talk to paper. Music helps me to set the mood. I found the love of writing at a point in my life when I felt that nobody was listening to me. I pulled out a pen and pad and let it all out. When I was finished, I felt free! So I never stopped writing, no matter what the topic.

Nichole Keene – p. 102

Nichole is a young woman who overcame a serious addiction that began in her youth. Through her poem, Nichole shares her pain and her triumph. Nichole continues to inspire people and plans to help others overcome their addictions.

Lisa Kelvin – p. 7

My name is Lisa Kelvin and I am from China. I have lived in America for three years. I am the mother of a high school student and have been attending an ESL class since I first came to America. I was an accountant for a university in China for years. I liked my career and now am preparing for the graduate school test. I hope to start my education in accounting and continue my career as an accountant in America. I have many ESL teachers that helped and are still helping me in Wooster and Canton. I appreciate all of them.

Masako Kuehmstedt – p. 118

I was born in Japan. I met and married an American soldier in 1955 and together, we moved to the USA and started our family. After 56 years of marriage, I lost my beloved husband. The passage I wrote expresses my sorrow in losing him and the process of dealing with my loss.

Marilyn Kuhns – p. 20**Youn Lee – p. 119**

I have two beautiful, active boys and a husband who pastors the local Korean church where I play piano for the services. Once my English improves, I plan to go for schooling or a good job.

Judith Leibinger – p. 30

My name is Judith Leibinger, and I am twenty years old. I am originally from Germany, but I am working here in the United States for one year as an au pair. One of my host children inspired me to write a story about how he changed my feelings about taking care of children, especially him.

Mei-Ling Lin – p. 36

My name is Mei-Ling Lin. I attend ESOL classes to improve my English. I am thankful to have the opportunity to go to these classes.

Bobby Litteral – p. 84**Patrick A. Lockhart – p. 41**

Patrick A. Lockhart is 35 years old. He lives in Lowell, Ohio, with his 10-year-old son Josiah. Patrick works as a night watchman for a housing development. Patrick is also currently taking classes to earn his GED and hopes to attend college this year.

Destiny Lowe – p. 83

I'm Destiny Alexis. I am from Shelby, Ohio. I am the mother of a beautiful little girl who is my world. I wrote this poem because I have gone through a lot in my life but the truth, whether good or bad, will always be seen.

Jose Magana – p. 64

Jose Magana is originally from Mexico. He enrolled at Scarlet Oaks in September of 2012 and has made significant progress. He has completed the Pre GED Test and will take the GED Test in the spring. He is determined to have a better life in the United States.

Gabriela Martinez – p. 81

Gabriela has been living in the U.S. for about a year. She has one daughter who is very active in school and a husband who travels back and forth from the U.S. to Mexico.

Nery Mejia – p. 4

My name is Nery Mejia and I am from Honduras. My native language is Spanish. I came to the U.S. in 2010. I'm married. I'm an unemployed accountant and I've been attending ESOL classes at Canton City Schools.

Amanda L. Miller – p. 24

My name is Amanda Lee Miller. I am a GED student and I want to complete my education and be a great role model for my children. I love to take pictures. I am very passionate about photography and I want to pursue a career in it.

Gwendolyn Miller – p. 121

Ms. Miller is preparing to take the GED at Tri-C in 2013. She is an asset to the classroom, her family, and her co-workers.

Lauren Moffitt – p. 45

Lauren Moffitt is 24 years old. She is the mother of two small children, Mayson and Deserray Moffitt. She attends ABLE class in Washington County. When she entered the Washington County Jail, she decided to earn her GED. Upon her release, she plans on attending GED classes in Tyler County, West Virginia.

Pui Yin Ng – p. 17**Van My Nguyen – p. 47**

I'm a recent arrival from Vietnam. I used to work as an accountant. Once my English improves, I plan to return to school or look for work.

Kristin L. Pollard – p. 8, 21**Michaela Preiss – p. 78****Chun Qin – p. 10****Joanne “Nicky” Roach – p. 34****Mike Roberts – p. 91****Manuela Salve Roquejani – p. 35**

I am Manuela, a 27-year-old Brazilian woman full of dreams. I have the amazing opportunity to live in Ohio where I work as an Au-Pair, study English, and learn about the American culture.

Linda M. Seymour – p. 61

I enjoy writing stories and poems, playing with my dog, and reading.

Irma Sibrian – p. 122**Jared Smith – p. 105**

My name is Jared Smith. I'm from Van Wert, Ohio, and have a four-year-old daughter. She inspires me everyday to improve my life.

Christopher Stanley – p. 99

Christopher is an adult student at Southern State Community College. He is learning and focusing his skills toward a new career path. He displays his love of learning daily.

Mary Stump – p. 29

Mary Stump is a mother, sister, aunt, and great-aunt. She enjoys reading, spending time with her family, and with her dog, Sage.

Sally Sylla – p. 94**Lucy Talley – p. 15****Marilyn B. Troyer – p. 114**

I was born and raised in rural Northeastern Ohio and attended a parochial school from grade 1 to grade 8. With the help of ABLE, I hope to pursue a career in the medical field.

Martha Joy Troyer – p. 6, 68

I just earned my GED and plan to be a teacher in an Amish parochial school for the next school year. I live near Apple Creek, Ohio.

Alesha M. Tucker – p. 95

Married housewife with one son and an ABLE student.

Hope Turnage – p. 56

Hope is a GED student. She wishes to fulfill a promise made to her children.

Kashena Violet – p. 80

Larra A. Wall – p. 16

I have enjoyed writing since I was a little girl. Writing is healing and it helps me to face issues and discover new insights.

Mary Beth Weaver – p. 68, 120

I just earned my GED and live near Fredericksburg, Ohio.

Rosemary Willis – p. 58

Rosemary is a student at Seeds of Literacy in Cleveland, Ohio.

Nora Wolford – p. 113

Honorable Mention

Malak Abdulbori
Meybi Aguilar
Nehemias Aldana
Joaquin Alonso
Khawla Alsabbagh
Chawone Ardrey
Abeer Awad
Shindal Bailey
Janet Barragan
Cyle Black
Chira Blackshear
Wanda Bogdanowicz
Razika Bouziani
Virgil Bowman
LeAnna Boyd
Joy Brown
Lidia Burger Kotwica
Tammy Caldwell
James Carner
Brenda Carroll
Davide Castelli
Fernando Catillo
Diana Castro
Jane Cawley
Bill Cervelli
Bomi Chung
Lisa Chupp
Calvin Cole
Robin Cole
Kenneth Collins
Teneisha Cooper
Yvette Cooper
Dragica Cosic
John Covic
Natasha Crabtree

Kevin Cranson
Diana Cszasz
Stanislaw Czyzyzki
Janice Dailey
Charolette Davis
Rashad Davis
Ani Davitian
Juan Carlos De Leon
Racquel Denton
Ion Diacov
Ashley Dingey
Thi Do
Sherry Dodd
Charlie Dondiego
Bessie Downing
Debra Eblin
Michael Edwards
Winter Everson
Amal Fana
Shane Fields
Karen Florence
Jeanie Frazier
Valerie Fuller
Mike Galindo
Marco Gallegos
Maria Garcia
Sergio Garcia
Hovhannes Gasparyan
John Gilles
Omar Gomez
Blanca Granizo
Juan Gutierrez
Gregorio Guzman
Chadia Hachem
Hiam Haddad

Vera Hajdari
Serena Hardin
Pok Hui Harris
Samantha Hoskins
Joey Huddleston
Faty Ibra
Kadiatu Ibra
Jacqueline Ibrahim
Amada Isaac
Tomoko Ishida
Nathan Jackson
Asia Jenkins
Barbara Jenkins
Hasina Jenna
Demetria Jordan
Roumie Khachan
Asma Khan
Hafsa Khan
Daisuke Kihara
Morgan Kingsley
Maria Lilliard
Donna Lint
Jada Loius
Magaly Lugo
Alma Luna
Latrice Macon
Shamon Mahone
Shella Marquez
Felicia Mayer
Carolyn McCormick
Maurine McCowan
Philomena McCoy
Andrea McNutt
Mike Middleton
Bogdan Mihai
Claudia Mihai
Ana Mihaila
Diana Miller
Hesbeidy Mondragon

Amanda Monroe
Libia Montalvo
Magali Monteagudo
Jasmine Moss
Jessica Mulkey
Maria Muniz
Phillip Murrery
Mildred Myles
Gladys Nevarez
Hau Nhan
Mary Nicholas
Lerone Nichols
Claudia Niz
Vince Palmer
Bobbie Park
Rick Patterson
Olga Perez
Sylvia Perry
Brianna Phillips
Jeff Phillips
Cody Planck
Jose Portal
Maribel Portillo
Amy Raber
Radmila Radjenovic
Nele Ranzau
Vicki Ratliff
James Rayburn
Erika Rendifo
Monica Resor
Jacquelyn Rice
Wendalina Rivera
Rikki Robinson
Jeisson Rodriguez Valenzula
Laura Romero
Isis Roufail
Brittany Rummell
Leonor Salinas
Maribel Salinas

Elena Sandu
Ghorghe Sandu
Josue Santiago
Lymaris Santos
Bojan Saponja
Jonathon Seevers
Reena Shaji
Patricia Shaw-Patmon
Georgette Shnoudi
Adriana Silveria
Kalila Sims
Ryan Skidmore
Vuong Son
Anthony Smith
Tanji Smith
Tonya Stanfield
Suzan Sunseri
Brittany Sweet
Elzbieta Swiderek
Nadiya Synyshyn
Volodymyr Synyshyn
Malgorzata Szpakut
Sumaya Taher
Olga Tarbeeva
Anthony Tate
Robert Todoran
Jolanta Turolska
Adriana Vasquez
Trajana Velloff
Julio Vicente
Cruz Volquez
Hai Vu
Nhu Vu
Rita Waked
Dianne Wallace
Kaitlynn Webb
Joshua Whitstine
Matthew Whitstine
Lisa Williams

Kelia Wilson
Amber Wise
Janike Wissmann
Alisha Wynegar
Molly Yeagley
Gang Yin
Miriam Yoder
Maria Zeffer

