“Stories Come To Life!”
Literacy Residency

with Anita Woodley
Literary Arts Teaching Artist - Durham Arts Council

January/February 2014
Neal Middle School - Durham, North Carolina
Mrs. Kersey, 6th Graders
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Hello there ya’ll!

As promised here is our book featuring the personal stories you shared with your fellow classmates, me and Mrs. Kersey in our 3-day Literacy Residency.

Congratulations...
You are now all independent, published authors!

I am very proud of you for sharing your heartfelt stories with the world. Your perspectives very important and help us better understand the world that we live in. The world will be better for hearing your opinions and thoughts because you matter so much.

Your voices. Your writings. And your positive participation in our community is very much needed to make this a better place for us all to live, work and grown in. I know times get rough and many things seem out of your control even perhaps scary at moments. However, through it all find a way to think of something positive to help you stay on your life course. Let nothing stop you from reaching your goals, not even yourself!

One of the biggest challenges for me while editing your book was reading about the struggles many of you face daily. Many as I shared in class are similar to the issues I faced as a teenager in Oakland, California living in poverty. My occasional tears transformed into smiles when I thought about how you were using the positive outlet of writing to clear your minds, bodies and souls of that stress. You all truly inspire me!

Keep up the great work. Life improves.

Search for positivity everywhere & in everything you do!

Always Wishing You The Very Best,
Anita Woodley

Mrs. Kersey’s 6th Grade Core 1-4 Classes at Neal Middle School of Durham, North Carolina
Sponsored by the Southwest Durham Rotary Club, Neal Middle School & Durham Arts Council’s CAPS
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“Sibling Cell Phone Rivalry”

BY: MICHAEL BELL

One day when I was at my house my brother was playing music loudly, so my mom took my phone away from me. My brother saw it wasn’t me, but didn’t speak up. I felt stupid because I should have said something about it to my mom, but I didn’t. For two days I couldn’t do anything since I was on punishment and my brother was laughing at me the whole time.

After those two days passed I got my phone back from my mom, but my phone’s battery was dead. I could not charge it because my brother broke my charger. However, my mom said, “I’m going to buy you another charger.” Once we bought another charger and plugged it up I went downstairs. Then one day after school I snitched on my brother just for fun and I got to laugh at him when he got in trouble.
“Multiple Business Owner & Community Leader”

BY: JAMERION CROAKER

When I get older I want to be a multi-business owner, operating a food and clothing business. I desire to be a business owner because I feel bad for the people who really are poor. For little kids, who don’t have any food or clothes, I will give those items to them for free. I will also build houses for the poor because if I had no food, water or a house I would want someone to be nice enough to do the same for me.

Another thing I would do is try to get people off the streets and make them stop acting bad by visiting schools and telling the students what I do in life and what I do to help people. High schoolers would learn how to get a job, so they won’t do illegal stuff for money. I would also like to be a rich man to help the family members who are my life and close to my heart pay their bills. I don’t want my family to have to worry about anything at all because I’ll be there for them.
“What People Think”

BY: MICHIAH SHEPHARD

People judge me because I was the girl who hung around many boys growing up. I thought that girls caused too much trouble and my father raised me up rough, kinda like a boy. He wanted to have at least one son in his lifetime, but he had all girls instead. Hence, he raised me like the son he wanted and never created. As a result, I grew up playing rough, started hanging with people in gangs thinking it was cool and fun, got into numerous fights and ran around the neighborhood getting bruises. I was told by my father, “Don’t let nobody disrespect you or put their hands on you!”

Looking back now, most of the fights were over stupid things that I thought were disrespectful to me. I would fight people older and bigger than me who were picking on me because they’d think, “Oh, she’s small, so she wouldn’t hurt me.” This made me a serious girl, so when someone hit me in the wrong place I would start punching that person in the nerves, hitting their pressure points. The reason I know all these techniques is because my father went to a military school and he taught me some of the stunts he learned, such as where to find pressure points. Pressure points are in your neck, arms, wrists, and other places. However, I only use the techniques that my father taught me to protect myself when I am in a very bad situation.

Later on my mother put me in church and I started singing in the church choir. Today, I have scars and I wonder... why I’m, like, this way and feeling bad about myself?
“Games”

BY: GUSTAVO JIMENEZ

I like to play my Xbox 360 and Xbox One. My favorite games for both of those consoles are “Call of Duty: Black Ops 2” and “Call of Duty: Ghosts.” I enjoy playing with my cousins and friends online most of the time on Xbox Live. I normally play both of my Xboxes on the weekends. However, I mainly play in the day because in the evening I have to go to sleep early, so that I can wake up at 6:00 a.m. to get ready for school.

Sometimes when I lose an important game online I feel mad to the point that I can see and hear flames burning. You may be wondering, “Why does he get mad when he loses an important game?” I get mad because the stakes are high and you can’t get something special if you don’t win that match. In “Call of Duty: Black Ops 2,” the highest round I’ve made it to is 63 and the lowest round is 25. When I get older I want to create a new video game.
“My Parents Survived 9/11”

BY: PETER ADETUNJI

My dad and mom survived 9/11 in a hotel for four days. My dad brought it up when I was 10 years old during one of the anniversaries of September 11th. I wondered how it happened to them? I mean, you go there to visit a friend and then boom the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center just fall down?!

I learned that my parents were staying in New York to visit with a friend, when they felt a big eruption. Then my mom wanted to get outside to see what was going on, but my dad saw what was outside first. There was dust, choking people outside. He told my mom what he’d seen and they escaped it all alive. It changed my thoughts about them because I thought they were just normal people with regular, everyday lives. I wasn’t born around that time, but my dad told me about it and it made me feel so lucky that they didn’t die.
“Aiming for the Top”

BY: ALVIN PICKEY

I thought I could be the best soccer player in the world. The first time I saw soccer being played I thought it was very easy. Now that I’m older, I know that soccer is very difficult to play. My dad inspired me the first time I ever saw him play.

During the first game of soccer I played I was extremely excited. I felt the wind blowing on my face and felt alive. It was game time and I could hear all the fans cheering. At that point, I felt the most alive in the sport. I always enjoy playing soccer and it’s forever been a dream of mine since I was little. Today, I am still aiming for the top!
“A Clarinet Player’s Life”

BY: JALISSA NEDD

Having a clarinet can be difficult. Most people think the clarinet is so easy to play, put together, and clean. Well, sorry to break it to ya, it is NOT easy at all! The first time I blew into the mouthpiece I made a high squeaky noise. I felt so embarrassed, but then my teacher said, “Just relax and just blow like you’re breathing.” I did it again and it made a smooth, still a little high, sound. Later, when I went home and finished my homework, I decided I was going to practice playing my clarinet. Well, let’s just say that when I opened the case, I had no idea what to do. The clarinet was in five big pieces. I did not know how to put it together or clean it. I picked up two pieces and tried to put them together, but they wouldn’t fit together. So, I tried to assemble the clarinet another way and the pieces still would not go in. I was getting so frustrated. I then asked my mom for help and we finally got it together. The next day on the bus I was cleaning out my clarinet and asked my friend for help because she’s was a clarinet player longer than I. She said, “Put this stuff called ‘cork grease’ on the clarinet.” Being new to playing the clarinet, I listened to her and literally put the cork grease on the clarinet! When I got to band practice my clarinet was all slippery, sliding out of my hands! My teacher asked me, “What is the matter?” I told her about the cork grease. She calmly told me, “You were not supposed to put cork grease on the whole clarinet.” But I didn’t know that you weren’t supposed to put it all over the clarinet. My teacher then said, “Give the clarinet to me so I can clean it off.” Tried as she might to clean it off, the clarinet was still greasy. After that she showed me how to clean it the right way. I was so happy that she didn’t get mad at me. I was already being too hard on myself when it first happened by thinking that I was a stupid person putting cork grease all over the instrument. My teacher just said, “You will have to wait until your clarinet dries and then you can play it again.” It takes a lot of practice and effort to keep the clarinet in good condition, but it is all worth it because I love playing the clarinet.
"Bang!" "Bang!" Shots fired. A group of gangs just shot an innocent person simply because he was wearing the wrong colors in another gang’s hood. In the city of New Orleans gangs run the streets. There is one gang that is most dominate. This gang is called the M.S. 13’s. The leader of this gang is called Esteban. Esteban is Mexican, tall, and very strong. The gang’s enemies are the Crips. The Crip leader is named Spider, but his real name is Miguel. The M.S. 13s are going around in the Crips’ territory. Suddenly Esteban’s van is over heated and has to pull over in the Crips territory. Then a blue car passes by and the car looks like it is turning back around. The group of the M.S. 13’s get ready to blast the people that are coming around. But the car drives away. The M.S. 13’s get back in the van and go back to their hood.

Next, the gang prepares for the night because today is the day all the gangs go to one place and they kill, shoot, and beat each other to the death. It is night and the gang has everything ready for tonight. The gang gets in the van and gets ready, but another gang opens fire at the M.S. 13 gang. This does not affect my life because my parents tell me not to pay attention to gang violence. One of my family members are in a gang, but he tells me not to go down the path he went down.
“Being a Fashion Designer”

BY: AZIYAH P.

When I was nine years old I knew I wanted to be a fashion designer. I love putting clothes together, making them look beautiful for me or other people to wear. I want to do this for the rest of my life because fashion designing is something I do almost everyday and I enjoy it. I can see my future ahead of me with nice cars, a nice house, and everything if I try hard. I don’t want to be like my mom when she had me and my brother at a young age and didn’t go to college.

Also if I try hard I can be a teacher or a hairstylist like my mom. If I succeed I will feel like I have done a good job and that I have met my goals in life. Going to college, passing with good grades, and again not doing what my mom did are the things I have to do to meet my goals. To me being a fashion designer is one of the best things in life that can happen to me. It's a great goal I have set for myself that I have already start working towards achieving.
“My First Fight”

BY: DEVIN SMITH

I remember the first time ever that I got into a fight. It was at a daycare near North Gate Mall. I was in Miss Cozart’s class with my twin sister, Morgan. It was almost the end of the day during free time. We were all playing with some toys. My sister was playing with a doll and I was playing with an action figure. I was always checking on her from across the room to make sure she was okay.

One time when I looked over at Morgan she had a sad face. I was like, “What happened?” Then I looked across the room this boy had her doll. I dropped my stuff and ran towards him, trying to take the doll away from him, but he had a strong grip on it. I threw him down and we were rolling until I stopped him from rolling and punched him in the nose. His nose was bleeding and I stood over him and said, “This my Morgan’s doll, not your Morgan. My Morgan!” There was blood on the carpet and the boy snitched that I punched him. I got in trouble by Miss Cozart and she put me into time out. I was a spoiled child, so my parents didn’t do anything.
“Good At Karate”

BY: JHAKI ANDERSON

I love doing Karate. I am very good at it. I been doing Karate since I was 2 years old. I traveled to China and that’s how I begin Karate. I went to China for a vacation with my mom and that Chinese culture was good. There are nice people who greet you and they make you feel welcome. I learned Karate from my master who taught me it and other stuff like speaking Chinese (a little) and eating with Chopsticks. A few words I know are how to say, “To Your Health, I love you, Grandma and Grandma.”

I am the master of Karate. My Master said, “If you have beef with somebody just meditate.” I’ve basically won some matches. My next match is on Saturday and this is why I love Karate, plus I am good at it.
“ENVIED ATHLETE”

BY: Paul

I became interested in sports at 8-years-old because my dad played all types of sports. Personally, I want to reach a higher goal in sports then my dad whom became an All-Star Athlete.

But now I get bullied since I am better than people around my neighborhood at playing sports. When they bully me my temper gets hot like buffalo wings and I start to taste buffalo sauce and I react by fighting them. Once I blank out, fighting them all at once and they never mess with me anymore.
“Video Game Expert”

BY: JAYVEN GALLASHAW

When I see video games, I see a normal color. I’m in the zone, and I hear everything in slow motion, especially in GTA 5. I taste Victory when I pass a mission. I don’t feel anything when I play. When I reach a hard part of the game everything goes 12.6 slow. The character in the story does their part of the story and I make sure I see that character the way I need to in order to win. When it come to a hard mission in the game I try all the techniques the characters have. I stay up to 11:00pm to pay games, but I do take breaks. The controller vibrates when the player does an action like jump or kick. Every time I mash the buttons, the slow-motion meter rises, the volume rises, and more. The temperature sometimes get hotter and hotter. Finally, the characters talk about having to leave the location. I know I succeeded when the screen reads, “Mission Passed.” When I start another mission the cycle starts up again.
“When I Played Paintball”

BY: TYREKE LEWIS

My dad introduced me to the game of paintball. He told me that when he played he was in a tower with about 20 people and there were 100 people on the ground trying to shoot them. He also compared paintball to Zombies on the Black Ops video game.

I remember the first time my dad took me to play paintball last summer. It was a nice day, but when we arrived we learned that it was closed. We went to the gas station where there was a place to eat. By the time we finished our meal the paintball place was open, so we parked and went to the register to get admission card, gun, masks and paintballs. Next, stop was the practice area and when we finished I joined my very first paintball match. I was really scared of getting shot, so I stood behind a cover. Eventually I did get shot, but it only hurt for a second.

When the next match came up I was not scared. It smelled like paint when we started the game and immediately someone shot towards me and it passed my ear making a whooshing sound. Then moments later, someone shot me in the face! When I walked out of that match, upon looking around all I could see was paint, a broken car and small houses. I walked to my table and drank some of my beverage and it tasted like paint. I even had paint on my hand and I touched my bottle cap, which made Gatorade taste like cherry paint. Me and my dad continued to play more games of paintball for the rest of the day and when they closed we returned home.
“Texting Trap”

BY: VANCE JENKINS

It was just a normal Christmas Eve. All of my family was in the living room waiting for the time to open presents then, BAM!! Twelve o’clock strikes. First I gave out my presents to them that I made which were Christmas bracelets and rings. Next, I opened my presents and I was full with excitement.

I got a phone, headphones, Xbox 360 Kinect, clothes, shoes, and more. The following day i was on my phone, now in comes the problem, texting! You see, I didn’t find out it was a problem until three weeks later when my parent told me, “You have stopped paying attention to anything else that you are doing and you stay up too late.”

Finally, when I went to school that following day I was day dreaming and sleepy. I missed important information in my classes, so my parents said, “You have to be off the phone by 10:00 p.m.” The lesson I learned was if you stay up texting you will miss out on the good stuff.
“Something Goes Wrong”

BY: CHIKKIYA LEAK

When I found out that my next door neighbors both died I was devastated. I remember all the good memories we had together with Jerron McGirt and Jessica Ester Liriano Sosa. Me and my sister used to go over there and hang out, loving all the laughs we had.

I loved my neighbors like fried chicken, they were family to me. When I found out they died I just want to cry so hard. I tried to keep it together, but I just had to let it all out. What made me miss them the most was the fact that I use to go over to their house next door all of the time and I grew close the them. The best memory is when we went to the carnival, watched lots of performers and had fun laughs like a big happy family. We also used to go to the store and the park.

My neighbors were parents to three kids. Jerron was 34-years-old and was the C.E.O and editor of Bull City’s Heat magazine. Jessica was 33-years-old. When they got shot on December 16, 2013 it hurt me and made me feel a little scared.
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“Stunt Man”

BY: KWANSON DINGLE

When I was five years old, I started doing crazy stuff like jumping off of things. One day I was in my backward when an idea popped in my head to get my water hose and water the dirt. I sat in the dirt, put my hands in it and started to make mud cakes. I did this because I thought I was a disgusting person who liked to play in mud and get worms out the dirt. I left it alone overnight. The next day I put sticks in the mud cake and pretended they were candles.

I am always inspired to do crazy stuff, like yesterday evening I was in citizen school and was playing football outside. It was very cold and I couldn’t catch the ball no matter what. My fingers were freezing and every time the football hit my hands it would hurt. This boy started talking trash and touching me and I told him, “You are gay because you keep touching me.” At the end of the game he came in my face popping his mouth off and I punched him in his chin. It was a risky move because I could have gotten jumped by more than one person.

When I was in preschool I was building a lego sculpture and a boy knocked it over. I got mad and pushed him. Now remember I was just four-years-old, so I didn’t know any better. Anyway, he pushed me back and hit me. We collided, rolling all over the floor. I felt a pull on my hair that was locked at that time in my life. The boy pulled my hair out! I bit him on his leg, taking his skin off and he was bleeding bad. When I went home the boy’s mother came to my house and my mom told me to apologize. I did apologize, they left and my mom gave me a butt whooping. My punishment lasted for three weeks.
“My Career”

BY: SHYAIRA TAYLOR

I want to be a singer and an actress maybe when I get older. I’ve loved to sing when I was a little kid. Today I still do it all the time and I’m now at the point that no matter where I am at, I will just sing all day. Sometimes I never stop singing. I just find any song that I can think of and sing that song. The song I like to sing right now is by Beyonce called, “Drunk In Love.”

I want to be an actress since it seems fun and I know that I can do a good job at it. During the summer, sometimes for hours at a time, me and my sister would make up plays for us to perform ourselves just for fun.
“My Worst Injury”

BY: ANTONI LEMUS

One day I went to a funeral with my mom and my entire family. On the way there I asked my mom, “Why are we going to this funeral if we don’t even know who died?” She told me, “The person who died was my friend.”

When we arrived I took out my sister from the vehicle and went inside where I put her down. I went back outside and saw one of my friends. I asked, “What are you doing here?” He replied, “The person who died was my parents friend.” I wondered if he wanted to play our favorite game tag and we played for a while, but it all stopped when the accident happened.

My friend pushed me really hard and I fell on a stone slap, landing on my knee. When I got up and went to the porch to sit down, I pulled my pant leg up to look at my knee. I was so scared when I looked and there was a half inch deep hole! I went inside to the bathroom and cleaned the blood off of my knee. I then told my dad I got hurt and we went home.

The next day we went to the doctors and they told us, “He will be fine.” They kept me in the hospital and after a few days I woke up early and I peeled off the scab that was about to fall off. I could walk after I peeled it off, but still walked around the hospital to make sure that my leg was okay. I told my dad I was okay and we left, but I had to leave in a wheelchair just in case something went wrong. I was able to go home after all, but I really enjoyed my time in the hospital.
“My Graduation”

BY: KEVIN ELIZALDE VASQUEZ

The best part about my graduation was when I got my diploma. The moment was exciting and I almost blacked out! There it was, my ticket to the sixth grade. I reached my hand out for the diploma and…. wait a minute, I can’t tell you that before I tell you how it all started.

I awoke at 8:00 a.m. on June 6, 2013. I was surprised that it was my graduation day because fifth grade felt as if it lasted an eternity! I put all that energy away for later, ate some Frosted Flakes and brushed my teeth. Afterwards, I changed into my black tuxedo with a blue button-downed shirt, a striped tie, black pants, and some nice shoes. Then, my parents drove me to the elementary school. When I got there, my classmates were waiting for me in the classroom where I saw everybody lined up to go to the gym. I lined up and thirty seconds later, we were in the gym marching in one by one, while every fifth grade parents sat in the bleachers looking straight down at us. I got so nervous that I almost peed in my pants!

My class sat in chairs near the stage, while all of the teachers said something. Then my teacher told me it was time to get my diploma and the teacher called my name. I was nervous. I walked back down to my seat after she handed me my diploma. I was surprised that I passed the fifth grade. It was one of the best moments of my life.
“Started at the Top”

BY: ANONYMOUS

My family started at the top in life and dropped to the bottom before ending up in the middle level of living. Everyday to this date we are still at the bottom, but my mother and stepdad have been working to get our family back on top.

During the top level of life, until 2011, we had a really big house. When my dad had to turn himself in to jail and my mom cheated on my dad with my stepdad we lost it all. At first my mom and stepdad had everything that me and my sister wanted just like when my dad was home.

Then the bottle level of life was horrible. We lost our home. I lived on Hoover Road in the area of the Durham Housing Authority. We moved to my great-grandma’s house and she was never satisfied, so we left and went to my grandma on my mom’s side house to live. That is where we stay at right now.

The middle level of life is good and bad because my stepdad treated my mom like she was crap and never paid the bills on time. The good part is that we are getting a house of our own again with my stepdad that we can call our own.
“My Uncle, My Best Friend”

BY: JAMISA STOKES

When I was five-years-old, my uncle Jalil Hakeem Stokes passed away. This wasn’t an ordinary day, it was December 25, 2007 which we all know as Christmas. My uncle was my best friend until he passed away. It was 4:30 a.m. and my uncle Jalil left an uncle of ours house named James. To this day, we don’t know who he is, but he shot my uncle who was driving home for Christmas.

I’ve had to deal with this every Christmas, but it’s not easy and I didn’t know about death at the time until my Grandma explained it to me. To this very day it hurts me that I lost my best friend which is my uncle Jalil Stokes. I felt like I couldn’t trust my family from now on because it hurts.

At his funeral you find out he is gone and I had mixed emotions. I was sad, angry and I didn’t know what to do. He was 21-years-old.
“Programmer Career”

BY: Jamal Harvin

In third grade I had my third idea of a career I wanted to have which was being a programmer. I stuck to that idea and it was all I could see at that moment. I only heard voices in my head saying, “You can do it.” I also tasted, felt and smelt my progress in the job field of programming. It tasted like cake, it felt like the speed of light, and smelled like tacos. I used websites to help me progress quickly. I am good with mathematics, but just stopped doing the homework at fourth grade because I understood it and I was bored. However, in sixth grade I started doing my homework again.

I am still taking technology classes in sixth grade. I found a brochure about programming at North Gate Mall when there was a college fair. You see, I am the kind of kid that can care less about what my family says if they tell me, “I can’t do it.” I don’t listen to people who try to stop me from achieving my goals.

For four years, I’ve been practicing programming and looking for colleges that will help me reach my goal. I spend three to five hours on those types of websites. I am a fast learner when it comes to something that I am interested in. I am also a fast typist yielding about 15 words per minute. None of my family members type fast, but I can look away from the computer and type while talking to someone or watching television.
“The Talent That I Thought I Didn’t Have”

BY: ANONYMOUS

When I was two-years-old my Grandma and her sister were driving down the road going somewhere and a song came on the radio that I knew. I started singing it to them.

When I was 10-year-old my Grandma told me that I can sing and I was like, “No, I can’t,” and she told me the story of when I was two. So when my mom’s friend came over to visit she had me to sing. Now I am shy to sing in front of people. I thought my talent was going to be dancing, but now I sing. My mom told me, “One day you are going to be a famous person when you grow up.” I said, “Umm, mom not if I am making C’s and D’s and B’s.”
“Avoiding Distractions”

BY: JAVON KEITH

When it comes to me, I try to avoid bad things and do good things to avoid them. A lot of people I know have been in jail and died. Some of them went to jail because of drugs. Some of my family members smoke. I try to avoid those things by playing sports to keep me busy because I’m good at football and staying in school. For example, once I avoided kids that tried to make me throw rocks at people’s windows and I said, “No, I can really get in trouble doing that and it’s not going to lead me anywhere.”

One of my cousins died in a car crash. Sometimes I feel that could happen to me or someone else at anytime. I know I chose the right future for me when it comes to playing football because I am good at it. I had a great football career while playing with my old team. It kept me busy, especially on my dad’s side of the family since most of them played football before getting distracted by bad things. I don’t want to follow in that path.

One of my goals is to be one of the greatest NFL players ever. However, to do that I need to do good in school, study and train for football while staying out of trouble. I have a good family on both sides and they are good in different ways. They support me. If it wasn’t for them I probably wouldn’t be here right now.
"I Love School, but..."

BY: ANONYMOUS

I love going to school. School is fun, but it is just too hard for me to think. I keep getting bullied on the bus and in school. It is just too hard. I just don't know what's wrong with me? I don't know why people use to make fun of me? I do good things all the time and they are always getting in trouble, yet I am the one that is bullied because I get good grades.

Something must have happened to me, to make them keep bullying. It was one time that I didn't give a girl anything back, for what she gave to me. I didn't tell anyone because I was afraid of her. This is my life story.
“Picking Fights”

BY: TROY JONES

My topic is fighting. I pick fights because I have been bullied a lot. It usually happens due to the way I look and the way that I dress. A lot of people get bullied, but not like me and the reason I say that is because when I was five starting school nobody liked me because of my skin tone. I wanted to go home but my mom said if I don’t stay she would not take me to the fast food place, so I had to stay at school. I kept crying until my dad came to pick me up from school. While on the way home I want to go back to school to make some friends.

When I was being bullied I felt like fire and I couldn’t see anything. I tasted pizza and I smelled fire. I couldn’t hear anything either. At the end of the school year nobody was messing with me because it was my birthday. I brought pizza and they wanted some, but even though I brought a lot of pizza I didn’t want to give them any, but my mom made me. I had two boxes of pizza leftover and everyone asked me for seconds as well as to be my friend. I said, “Yes,” to some of them and said, “No,” to the rest.
“Sports and Academics”

BY: TORRY TRUELUCK

My tops is about sports and how I can improve in the classroom. I want to play sports because when I was younger I didn’t want to lose. Sometimes when I lost I would take my jersey off, showing disrespect. I really didn’t want to take it off, but when people are so slow I do not want to be a part of or associated with slow people.

I want to talk about the classroom because sometimes I do not behave well in class. One time I had a “D” grade in a class on my report card and my mom put me on punishment for a month. But my punishment really did not work the first time. Instead I felt down and alone, hot like fire.
“My Mama’s Balloon”
BY: JAMAURY PLEASANT

When my mona told me she had a hole in her heart I thought she was faking because you can't breathe like that. But when she told me she was born with her heart that way. I learned she wasn't faking when I asked her mom to confirm it. My fears were that she would die before her time by having a hole in her heart.
“My Family (That is Weird)”

BY: RAMONA “MONA” MANGUM

Another day with a weird family that keeps getting weirder... everyday!!! To me my family is all about the, “Ooh who dat?! He fine.” I grew up in a house full of girls. It annoys me because I’m the youngest, so when they say that to me I say, “He won’t get with you...” Oh, the girls names are, wait I totally forgot. Okay, just kidding their names are Danielle, Sierra, Olivia and guess which one I hate? All of them.

Danielle is always asking me for something. Sierra sits in her room in the dark and that’s freaky. And Olivia... don’t get me started on this chick. She sings all the time. When I ask her to stop she says, “Uhhhh... yeah, No!” Then I am like, “Ya better before I clock you upside with two frying pans on the side of your face.” I just wanted to smack her, drag her, choke her, make her neck, face, and nose out of order. Olivia was the one that I actually hated the most, but have our ups and downs. It your wondering why I wanted to do all that to her it’s because she always brags, tell her problems to people and I’m in the corner like, “Who is you? Girl, you gonna come in here and act like you own the throne? Chick please go wash some clothes for school or get a gift card from Walmart!”

My mom acts black, but talks and sounds white. She is one of those kind of people that are good to turn her back on you real quick and talk about you like, “Hey girl, I like your shoes,” in one breathe and then say, “Why you look like a clown?” in the next breathe. My dad talks like, “Ayyyyye wassup Hanging out with friends being so cool you know what I’m sayin’.” And I am like, “Curfew! Be here by 10:30 p.m. not 11:30 p.m. and most defiantly not 12:00 a.m. or 12:30 a.m. understood?” My dad said, “No! I don’t have to ... BOOM!!” the door shuts and I just continued watching television.
Continued… “My Family (That is Weird)"

BY: RAMONA “MONA” MANGUM

Here comes my sister walking down the hallway, “Hey Mona,” Sierra says. “Hey Sierra… Why are you here?….I have to wash the dishes oh and mom wants you to finish washing your pots after I’m done.” She said, “Okay… whatever.” After that I was tending to my own bubble.

I wake up, go to school, have some “all about me drama.” I have a stalker in my fourth Core. She stares at me all the time and teachers say, “Well it is not all about you. You’re being distractive to the other students.” I told the teacher, ‘Well I never asked then to look at me…. I never said, “Hey everybody look at me. Yell about the girl staring at me, okay?! I don’t sit and wait if it’s something I don’t like I’m not gonna put up with it. I’m gonna say something. End of story! (Not Really though.)

There’s a lot of ups and downs happening all again. Everything we do we enjoy though. We love and care for each other.
“Football Memory”

BY: ANONYMOUS

My best memory of football was when we made it to the Championship game. In the final quarter, we were losing by three points. We had the ball. It was 4th down. The Quarterback threw the ball and the wide receiver caught it. I was so happy because that was the Championship game and that was our first time going that far in a season.

The next season we did good, but didn’t make it to the Championship. I didn’t get mad because we went the previous year and have a trophy to show for it that no one can take from us.
"The Day My Brother Died"

BY: Alayza Waddell

I love my brother because we used to do everything together. We went places like the store, the mall and the park where I’d push him on the swing until he went very high into the sky.

One day while I was in the house feeding my baby brother, my other brother was outside with my other sister Ajayla riding his scooter. Some man was driving crazy when he saw my brother and he hit my brother with his car.

I am writing about it to tell you that I love you brother very much. I do really miss you a lot. I wish you were here right now and if you were here I would be hugging and kissing on your face.

I miss hanging out with you, you walking around the house playing with me and my sister. When you died it took all the happy away. He was seven-years-old when he died.
“State Fair”

BY: ANONYMOUS

First my dad said, “Let’s go to the State Fair,” so we all got ready and were on our way. When we got there I exclaimed, “Look at all of these rides!”

I got on the swing buggy with my brother after waiting in line for 25 minutes. While we were on the ride we asked to get off because just an hour before we ate pizza, soda, ice cream and funnel cake.
"My Dad"

BY: ANONYMOUS

I thought my dad, Tyrone Robert Covington, was going to be with me for a long time because he did anything that my mom said for me, my sisters and brothers. He wasn't getting in trouble and he did not go to jail. He didn't work a day in his life because he always gambled, winning a lot of money that he would give to us kids and my mom.

Unfortunately, five years ago my dad got shot in the head by his jealous friend because my dad mostly always won the money from the games when they gambled together. The day before my dad died he told my mom, 'I think my friend is jealous of me and he always looks at me the wrong.'

The next day my dad got shot on June 25, 2007. He was 28 years old. My dad’s brother and his cousin told that my dad’s friend did the shooting. The man who shot my dad went to jail. When he got released from jail after serving his jail sentence, he too was shot and killed.

I was sad because I thought my dad was going to stay with me for a long time. I was also sad when his friend, the guy who shot my dad, was killed because I liked him. He was close to our family and had fun when he visited our house. I miss my dad.
“The Greatest Scientist”

BY: NAKORE ROGERS

There was a kid named Marco Swindle who was a good reader, but was terrible at math. One of his dreams was to become one of the greatest scientists who ever lived. He tried hard in math, but he could never get it. Everything that they spoke about in class came out as gibberish to him. But when I got to that reading class, I felt like a mosquito in a blood drive.

Twenty-one years later Marco Swindle became one of the greatest scientists of all time. He was the first scientist to create a working time machine and he became a living legend.
“My Trip To Atlanta”

BY: BRITNY FRE

I was in 5th grade, chilling, having some fun and learning. It was Wednesday when my mom said, “You’re not going to school today.” I was excited, so I asked her where we were going and she replied, “Atlanta!” I was so excited that I gasped for air at the news.

We were on the road when my parents stopped the car and asked if we were hungry? Me, my twin brother and littler sister all replied, “No.” It was a four hour drive, so we made a few stops, eating Subway and making restroom stops. The last stop we made I was kind of scared because I hadn’t seen the people were were visiting for a long time. When my mom said we should enter their house I grabbed my little sister’s hand and we went in. Not even a minute passed when the people came downstairs to say, “Hey,” but I sensed something strange was going on. I noticed they were sad and I asked then why. That’s when they told me, “Our father just died.”

I was in shock and fell to the ground, asking them how they found out? They told me that he died of a massive heart attack. I cried and yelled, but later that day I also found out that he died at the gym while working out.

It was the next afternoon that my mom said, “Dress in black, so we can go to the funeral.” I noticed that I cried and the day was finished. After that we went back to North Carolina.
On Christmas Day, December 25, 2012, we spent the night in a hotel. It was still the afternoon when I decided to take a shower. As I took my towel and wrapped it around me, I heard a thump and screaming.

When I walked out the bathroom, all I saw were my two sisters on the floor and a stranger in our room.

My sister, Jenna was crying and my other sister Jada was dead. I felt like my life was over. I couldn’t breathe. As I grew up I stayed strong and I continue to enjoy life as it is.
“Football Role Model”

BY: AL-TARIQ CAINE

One day I saw my brother playing football when I was six-years-old. My brother would always ask me, “Do you want to play football?” I would say, “No!”

One year when I was eight-years-old he signed me up for football and I liked playing the sport. When I play football it calms me down. Now I am on the roll call for playing football in Middle School.
“Grandpa’s Floating Candles”

BY: KHYSEME THOMPSON

My Grandpa’s name is Elyoming. One day when we went to the State Fair and the very next day Grandpa went to the doctor’s office for an appointment. The doctors told him that he had two months before he would die.

During that first week, after his doctors appointment, he was weak and he couldn’t walk. The following week he died because of cancer.

After he died, when I got out of school, they told me that my Grandpa passed away the same day. Everybody was at my Grandpa’s house and we had a cookout at the park. We lit candle balloons and let them go as the fire lanterns floated away into the sky.

It was sad because my Grandpa left this earth. When we had a funeral everyone was crying and so was I. However, I stopped because I had to tell myself to stop crying, be strong.
“Passionate Gamer”

BY: STEVEN SANCHEZ

I am a very hardcore Gamer. I do this for a living now because a long time ago one of my friends taught me how to play, “A Call of Duty,” and I’ve been playing those kinds of games ever since. Games have been a big part of my life since I was a little kid. There were video games everywhere and that was the only thing I did.

Also when I was younger I had a Gameboy portable video game and I took it with me almost everywhere. Back then I just played video games for fun, but now I take it seriously. I want to be one of those Gamers who have the good equipment to play video games on. Some of them actually get paid just to play video games all day long, but not every Gamer gets paid.

I play video games all day and I love what I do. I don’t really play with my friends online because they are really loud. Once I started to get loud, too while I was playing at night and didn’t stop playing until 2:00 a.m. My parents don’t know that. The only game system I play is the Xbox 360 since I have all the games and know how they play out.

I am aiming to be a Video Game Designer for my career.
“I Love My Grandparents”

BY: ANONYMOUS

I’ve never met my grandfather or my grandmother. My grandfather Leonardo or Leo’, on my mother’s side, died in 2005 one year after my little brother Mario was born. Leo’ died of a heart attack. My grandmother Ita, on my dad’s side, died within that same year only months later. Ita died of cancer.

I have no memories for my grandfather Leo’, but I have one memory of my grandmother Ita when she gave me a Playhouse Wiggles Guitar for a present. I would still have it for good memories, but my stupid neighbors stole it from us. How do I know that they stole it? I saw it in their backyard and couldn’t get it because their dog would eat me.

I have lots of pictures of my grandparents as memories. My mom says, “You, your dad and your brother loved your grandfather. Your dad would party with him.” I love Leo’ even though I never got to meet or talk to him.

Our parents say, “To both of my grandparents you all were the world to them. They loved baby sitting you both.” It makes me sad that I couldn’t meet them. I still have my grandma on my mom’s side and I love her so much. I love and I miss my grandparents.
“Short Trip To the Mall”

BY: ADRIAN

(NARRATOR)

Firstly, after the mall, mom finally had the choice to go to the Guitar Center.

MOM: Okay, Adrian. We’re going to the Guitar Center just to see what they have.

ADRIAN: Why?

MOM: Because you always wanted to go there.

ADRIAN: … (thinking)

(NARRATOR)

It was dead night and cold about 5:30-6:00 p.m. and there was a lot of traffic. it took them about two hours to get to the Guitar Center.

MOM: Okay, we are here.

ADRIAN: Why?

MOM: What do you mean “Why?!” To see what is in there!

ADRIAN: Oh.
“My Uncle Marcus”

BY: ANONYMOUS

The last day I saw my uncle Demarcus Antonio Thomas was on June 21, 2013. He did so much for me. My Grandma Mary she told him, “If you keep doing bad things you’ll go to jail.” She always told him that when he did something bad in school.

On June 14, 2013 my Grandma told me that the Fed’s came and got him because someone told on him. He wasn’t the only one that was arrested there were two other boys the Federal police took as well. My uncle has four to five years in jail and now he is in the Durham County Jail, so he can tell his story to someone. When my Grandma told me the news my heart felt like it dropped. I was crying and I asked to go see him.
“Mom’s Close Call”

BY: VEEHJAY

Well, I’m going to tell you about the time my mom had to get a balloon in her heart. It was in the year 2011 and my mom got really sick one night. Me and my brothers got up from bed because our mom called for us. When we got to her room she was throwing up and running back and forth to the bathroom. We didn’t know what was wrong with her, so we told her to go to the hospital but she said, “No!”

We stayed up with her until the next morning and my mom decided to go to the hospital. When we got there the doctor ran tests on her. When we got the rest results back they told us, “The values around her heart didn’t have enough room to flow blood all the way.” I broke down and cried because I thought I had lost her. Did I lose her? No, but we almost did. I was very scared for my mother’s life and I could not stop crying.

My mother is a brave woman. Although she was on a breathing machine and oxygen, she still came home a week later.