



ISSUE 3 · FEBRUARY 2023

THE BELLE RINGER

The Belle Meade Upper School Newsletter

Warm Words of Winter

February was Black History Month, perhaps an odd thing to "celebrate" in a school that lacks diversity in skin color. We'd like to change that, but for now, we must be satisfied with the diversity of backgrounds represented in the student body.

Belle Meade accepts students without prejudice. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or national origin. Our educational model seeks to support all students as they grow into capable, confident and caring adults. Support includes classroom learning; reading; writing; basic arithmetic plus more advanced mathematical concepts including statistics; and how to conduct research and analyze data. We teach students to work independently and collaboratively. Our program includes self-assessment and peer review.

As you read the Black History Month essays included in this edition of The Belle Ringer, you'll see the amazing foundation of our program- the students. I hope you appreciate the diversity in their responses to the prompt, "Tell us about a Black American who has had a positive impact on you." The essays are thoughtful, revealing, powerful, and even humorous.

Happy reading!

Sue
English Teacher



Important Dates

March 2nd
TRIMESTER DINNER

March 3rd
CONFERENCES

March 17th & 18th
SPRING PERFORMANCE

March 20th
NO SCHOOL

March 27th - 31st
SPRING BREAK

April 10th
NO SCHOOL



New students

Sarah

(MADDY)

What likes bananas, plays piano and dances ballet?

Sarah does. Sarah came to Belle Meade in January. (She started the same day Valentina did.) Sarah does liberty work with Milkshake once a week. (He's a very popular horse.) She enjoys ballet, and auditioning and performing in plays. She is very serious about her ballet and practices for hours every week. Her twin brother homeschools. She also has two pets at home: a "wabbit" and a guinea pig. She wants to be an exotic animal veterinarian and work with horses. In her free time, she likes kayaking and paddle boarding. Sarah collects Squishmellows for fun.



Maddy

(SAYLOR)



Maddy started at Belle Meade on the 25th of January. She came from Wakefield in The Plains. She has two younger siblings, a brother and a sister. She also has two dogs Ben and Willow. Willow is a Bernadoodle. Ben is a black Goldendoodle. She likes to train her dogs with different tricks. She likes doing art and she is really good at drawing. Maddy has been riding for one and a half years now. She enjoys bareback, cantering, and jumping. She rides at Look Up Equestrian at least once a week and she rides Milkshake at school twice a week. "He has a good trot once I get him going, I'm determined to get him trotting on the rail," said Maddy.

Fire is one thing to make sure Maddy doesn't have. She is very mesmerized by it. It's scary (not really) how mesmerized she gets but once you get to know her great personality (really) you get used to it.



New Staff

Valentina

(SARAH)

Who is the most dope Spanish teacher ever? Mrs. Valentina joined our school the second week in January. Originally from the Peninsula de Yucatan in Mexico she spent her childhood by the beach and enjoyed long summers lying on hammocks with her family. She moved to Virginia in 2013 and now lives in Chester Gap. She recently celebrated her 32nd birthday on the 16th of February. She is a licensed special education teacher and enjoys teaching Spanish. In her free time she enjoys hiking, reading, doing yoga, and is even learning how to play the violin. This summer she is hoping to keep up the tradition of visiting her family in Mexico.



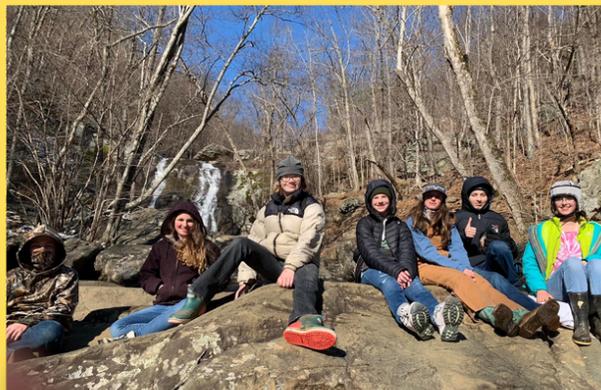
Turbo Muffinstuff

(AIDEN)

Turbo Muffinstuff is our new class pet! She is a tan and white dwarf hamster. She has pink eyes that are scary, but also weirdly cute. She is super friendly for a dwarf hamster. When she is not sleeping, she is energetic and loves to run on her spinning wheel. She likes to climb on hoodies to burrow in your armpit. She is now Sue's little assistant and keeps Sue company when we go to other classes.



HIKING WHITE OAK



"Adventure
is
worthwhile
in
itself."

AMELIA EARHART



S T E A M D A Y



HORSES!

TURTLE TIME





Rosa Parks

MADDY

I want things in life to be fair. Rosa Parks wanted the same thing. Rosa Parks was brave, she made a difference in what she set out to do. She was known as “The first lady of civil rights.” Her actions led to the Civil Rights Movement, to help black Americans to be treated fairly.

She was just an unknown seamstress, but still could make an impact. That inspired me, because even if you're unknown, and feel that you can't make a difference, you can. One of the important things that Rosa Parks did was sit in the front of the bus when she knew that she wasn't allowed. When the bus driver told her to move she refused and got arrested for breaking the law. Rosa Parks stood up for what was right, and still was willing to suffer the consequences of her actions. That inspired not only me, but many Black Americans to stand up for what is right. No matter how many times she was told she wouldn't make a change or no matter how many times she got arrested, she still made a difference, because she didn't let that stop her.

Rosa Parks did many things to help change the discrimination against Black Americans. Rosa Parks co-founded a self-development group, which sponsors young people to tour the country on supervised buses and learn about the history of the Civil Rights Movement. She then was awarded, presidential medal of freedom by Bill Clinton.

That is why I'm inspired by her because she fought for what she believed in, she made a difference, and didn't let anyone stop her. She made an impact on me, and has inspired me to do more, make a change, and fight for what I believe in. She was a part of many important roles to help with the freedom that African Americans have now. Rosa Parks had a positive impact on me because she stood up for what needed to be changed. This inspired me, because I want to do the right thing, I want people to be treated fairly, and no one to feel like they don't belong.

"Stand
for
something
or
you will fall
for
anything."

ROSA PARKS



How Madea Impacted My Life

SAYLOR

How Madea Impacted My Life

"Life is sometimes hard, and you have to laugh your way through it."
~Madea

"You only mess
up when you
mix them
seasonal
people with
lifetime
expectations."

MADEA

Madea is a fictional movie character that Tyler Perry created. She is funny, but she makes some good points. Madea has impacted my life in a lot of different ways through watching these movies.

Madea is always confident and independent. She doesn't like when people are rude to her; I look up to her for that as I don't like others being rude or mean in any way. She is tough and doesn't take disrespect from anyone. The way she goes about being confident is amusing but there are lessons that she teaches with this. Respect will get you a lot farther in life than being mean to others. I wish to be like her someday and develop my confidence like that. Madea has taught me to be more confident in all ways, use my voice, and to keep trying no matter how hard it is. I know she is a fictional character but sometimes the smallest things can impact your life. Madea can really show you all you really need to do is be respectful and honest which will get you far. She shows you to not take people being mean or dishonest to you in any situation and that you deserve more than that.

Madea has not only impacted my life by putting a smile on my face and making me laugh but by showing me it's ok to be independent and be myself. One of my favorite quotes from Madea is "This is what I learned in all these years on this earth. If somebody wants to walk out of your life let them go." I feel this is a good rule to live by. Madea shows me that you don't take anything in this life for granted.

This life is too short to not enjoy it in every form, especially through laughter. She said, "Life is sometimes hard, and you have to laugh your way through it". Surrounding yourself with positivity and positive people helps keep that smile on your face. Madea has taught me that all you need to be is nice even when people aren't nice to you or to let them go. I have learned so much about myself through this character.



My Nana

AIDEN

My Nana taught me how to skin a rabbit. I never really had a grandma. They all passed away when I was about seven or eight, but my Nanna was there when I was born. My nanna watched me grow up. She was around for all of my birthdays. She is married to my great-grandfather, Poppop. She's been with my Poppop forever. They live in a small house on a farm in Middleburg.

I had been asking for a .22 rifle forever. One Christmas, when I was about 12 my Nana surprised me with a .22 Winchester rifle. It's really nice. She bought it brand new. She taught me how to shoot it. When I shot my first rabbit (at her house), I asked Poppop to help me skin it. He said, "No, I'm kinda busy right now." I asked Nana. She said, "Sure after I finish my trivia."

Nana laughs a lot- even when she's down, she laughs. She could have a lot of reasons to be down. She was born in Charleston, WV and was the oldest of six kids. She lived in an abusive home until the age of 16 years old when she went into foster. She was the only black person in her foster home.

"In order to graduate from high school, I choose to ride the city bus 17 miles each way. I worked after school at a law firm. I had Jason at 18 years old and started college when he was two months old. I still worked. I had the girls at 21. I went back to college when they were 15 months old. I worked full time and attended college full time, riding eight buses a day as I didn't have a car."

My Nana started a single mothers group in her hometown. It was sponsored by the Covenant House which helps those who are low-income and or homeless. She's faced many instances of discrimination in life- from denial of housing to denial of jobs. One time, she went to look at a rental apartment. The landlord was white and my Nana was black. He didn't know that she was black because she sounded like a white southern girl. When she went to look at the apartment, the landlord looked at her and said it was taken.

"It is time for
parents to
teach young
people early on
that in diversity
there is beauty
and there is
strength."

MAYA ANGELOU



"Education is
the most
powerful
weapon you
can use to
change the
world."

NELSON MANDELA

My Nana (con't)

AIDEN

My Nana told her white foster dad what happened. He made an appointment to see the apartment. When he got there, he talked to the landlord and said the apartment was for his daughter. The landlord asked where she was. She got out of the car and the landlord was shocked. My Nana makes people get to know her. For many people, it changes how they refer to all black people.

I'm white and my Nana is black. My Nana is related by marriage, but I consider her blood-related.



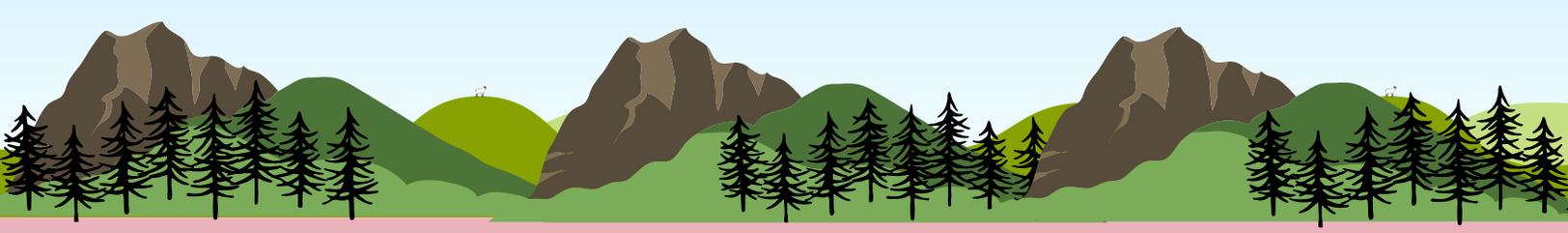
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Thank you!



Brother By Heart

LILY

It was a cloudy day with some gusts of wind. Race day. Two years ago. My church was having a 5k-run as a fundraiser. We hosted the race at Liberty High School in Bealeton, VA. We ran past all the sports fields plus along the side of Highway 17. I was all sweaty and tired from finishing the run, and then I saw him!

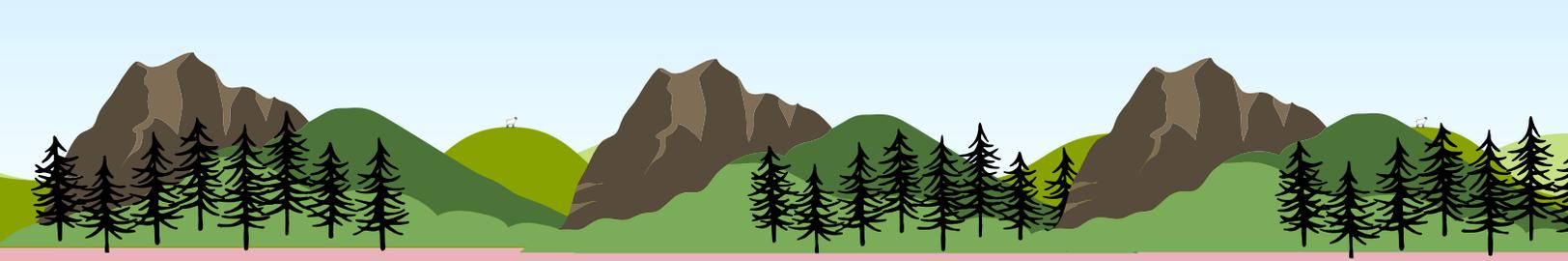
I didn't know he was going to be there and I don't think he recognized me at first. I walked over to see his family without knowing that Trevon was right there, three feet in front of me! We walked up and he gave me a BIG hug, we talked while still hugging. Trevon and I held on for as long as we could. After a long time of not seeing each other, it doesn't even feel like it's been that long, like it's just another normal day of seeing each other.

He has been in my life for as long as I can remember, but knowing how life works, of course we went our separate ways. When I was a little kid, I remember him coming to church every once and a while. Trevon usually just sat in the pews listening until children's time, where we all gathered together. We had VBS (Vacation Bible School) seasons together, played games, and read the Bible. We did potato sack races, egg and spoon races, 3-legged races, and ate many meals together. We always laughed together. I was always so happy. He was like my big brother who I looked up to. Trevon was just another young member of the church family. His funny but sweet personality was graciously appreciated in our family.

Trevon makes you feel safe like a pig in a blanket. His soothing voice when you're sad or exhausted gives you a boost. I can be myself and be happy near him. I've never had a biological brother but Trevon is the best brother to me.

“Friends
are the
siblings
that God
never gave us.”

MENCIUS



Opportunity, or lack thereof

GIULIETTA

I've been to a whole lot of schools in my life and in my conscious memory I can still only recount about four-five peers that were of colour. This, compared to the great number of people I have met in my schools, is a very, very low number. When I was given the prompt to write this essay, I genuinely did my best to come up with someone to write about. Everything, however, just felt disingenuous.

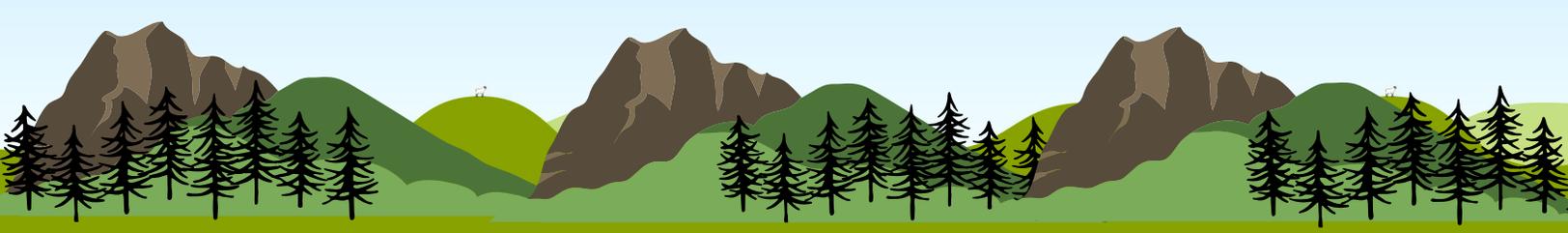
We all know who people like Martin Luther King Jr, Rosa Parks, or Barack Obama are. Most of my exposure to people of colour has been of people like this, people completely outside of my life. I know who these people are, I completely understand why they're important, but there is a distinct emotional disconnect between me and them. Apart from historical figures, there are also social media figures and celebrities. I consume their content, sure, but I don't know them. They're somewhere above me, far away in a place where I cannot exactly form an emotional connection as you would someone close to you.

I don't judge people by the colour of their skin. I don't separate the people around me by their ethnicity, automatically focusing on other matters. My lack of interaction with people of colour has been a consequential result of the places I've been and lived. I would love to be able to change this and have more diversity around me and in my life. Having differences, no matter the difference, from you in life is a necessity to learning and understanding the world. I haven't had the opportunity to expand my mind in a real way with this; research based on papers and written words can only take you so far.

I just haven't really been given the chance in life to have the kind of interactions that I would like to have written this essay about.

“Do what you
can,
with what you
have,
where you
are.”

THEODORE ROOSEVELT



Ryland the Giant

LANDEN

Ryland is 6 foot 10 inches tall and wears a size 22 shoe.

The first time he came up to me, on a Friday night at Dominion Skating Center, we had just finished a race at the skating rink. There were about 400 people there that night. The race started with about 30 people. Everyone took off to the first turn and this kid got to the first turn going too fast; with his cheap skates, BAM! he fell down with 29 people behind him! It was a giant wreck and here comes, Ryland plowing through the crowd of people. Watching this go down, I was in fifth place. I went behind Ryland because nobody was going to stop him. I went after him and, because I was a lot smaller and faster, I passed him! I won that race because of Ryland's quick thinking and his giant size.

After the race, I went to the snack bar for some pizza and a drink. Ryland came up to me laughing with a smile on his face about what just happened. We started going to all of the rinks in Virginia. One New Year's Eve, this one skating rink was doing a 12-hour skate session (7pm to 7am.) At about 3am, I was on the skating floor; all of a sudden, two boys ran out on the floor and started fighting! As they were fighting, I was right there in the fight not on purpose or reason- but I was there and the fight became a brawl and I was in the middle of it. Ryland was on the other side of the rink and saw me in the middle of this brawl. and skated over. With his big size, he threw some people off each other. The brawl was over. I still thank him to this day.

This past summer, Ryland and I went to Kings Dominion for the weekend. He got me to go on all of the big roller coasters, including the Intimidator 305, the 8th tallest roller coaster in the world. Ryland was not scared of anything. I've been to Kings Dominion hundreds of times over the years, but I had not really gone on all of the rides. I was a little bit scared. He was so calm and persuasive that he made the ride feel like it was nothing. It's hard to do that, it is his presence; just being around Ryland gets you to push yourself a little bit more. . . and now I could probably ride any roller coaster in the world.

“Only those who
will risk going
too far
can possibly
find out
how far
one can go.”

T.S. ELIOT