



the Reckoner

of Marc Garneau C.I.

JUNE 2022



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18 JUNE 2022
VOL 10 NO. 5

Cover Art: Zoe Cheng

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NEWS BOARD

A board to keep the student body informed about their school and local community.



by JEREMY DAI

It is the little things—the small acts of kindness and the few hours of volunteering from the many people across the globe—that build up to shape the world and push it towards a better future. On the hot, sunny morning of 15 May, students from MGCI's Key Club arrived at Taylor Creek Park at 10 am for the Tree Planting event hosted by the Kiwanis Club of East York. The event, celebrating the twenty-first year of the East York Key Club, was an opportunity to learn more about tree-planting, invasive species, and the environment as a whole. But, while the allure of volunteer hours, free pizza and drinks, and spending a day out with friends is certainly tantalizing, you may be wondering: What is Key Club?

Key Club is an international student-led organization dedicated to community service and volunteering. The acronym KEY stands for "Kiwanis Empowers Youth," representing its association with Kiwanis International, a parent organization that promotes community services and volunteering. With more than thirty-eight coun-

Planting Trees and Growing Kindness: MGCI Key Club's Pledge to the Community

tries represented and over 270 000 members participating, Key Club is the largest service program for high school students in the world.

Key Club offers students the ability to make a positive difference by providing volunteering opportunities to lead and serve the community. Various initiatives that include fundraising, donations, and volunteering, aim to improve the lives of people across the globe and support strong, lasting communities.

This year, MGCI's Key Club has hosted numerous events that run the gamut from Trick or Treat for Unicef to a Valentine's Day rose sale in collaboration with the Student Council, where all proceeds were donated to charity. Their most recent event, tree planting, was yet another opportunity for students to contribute five hours to their community.

"The tree planting event was a really great opportunity for the members of Key Club, both execs and general members, to help the community as well as meet members from other schools like AY Jackson,"

said Allyson Wu, MGCI Key Club's Vice President. "We were able to connect with Kiwanis Club of East York - our parent club, who hosted the event - and get some amazing work done outside of school hours too!"

At Taylor Creek Park, around sixty students were taught how to plant trees, including the extensive steps required to grow a healthy plant. The tree stumps were wrapped with perforated plastic in order to prevent field rodents from chewing on the bark, and they were mulched to keep the moisture in the soil. On top of planting trees, students also helped clear out and remove invasive species of trees by slashing the base and putting herbicides in. Students also learned more about the history of trees, with discussions being held on invasive species as well as the diversity of trees from various continents.

"It feels really nice to be able to know that you're making an impact, no matter how small," said Alaina Chen, a Grade 10 student that participated in the event.

The Tree Planting Event provided MGCI Key Club members with a hands-on opportunity to contribute to the community and become familiar with the surprisingly intricate process that is planting healthy trees. As time goes on, MGCI Key Club will continue to strive to make a difference, one small project at a time. ■



Photograph: Helen Lin

Works Cited

- [1] <https://www.keyclub.org/about/>
- [2] https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1CxH3MmJzQN0lvhb4AKpfy5oS-2N3RGMdKrFUp3oL9X8/edit#slide=id.gedo6aacb1f_o_o
- [3] https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1FIzahMc_dQ1DAaT-wY-WELXObGote1OSvIGnj3TL4GEM/edit
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Lights, Camera, Cupcakes: A Coveted, Captivating Clubs Fair

by ORIANA ZHOU

During the Clubs Fair on 17 May, MGCI students enjoyed freshly popped popcorn while learning about service from Key Club and let their imaginations run free when they decorated cupcakes to get a glimpse of the Culinary Club. The event brought smiles to the faces of numerous students, leaving them with an unforgettable time and new interests to pursue.

The Clubs Fair was a showcase event hosted by the Student Activities Council (SAC) giving students the opportunity to interact with new hobbies and other students.

There were more than twenty-five participating clubs, falling under the categories of humanitarian, social justice, art, hobbies, and academic clubs.

Isabel Liu, the Jr. Clubs Coordinator, spoke highly of the importance of the Clubs Fair: "I want people to be able to be familiar with the school community involving extracurriculars as well as gain new experiences by trying new things through participating in clubs."

As students roamed the hallways, they found the Clubs Fair extremely enjoyable and informative. Grade 9 student, Patricia Zhang, explained how Clubs Fair opened her to new experiences. "Clubs Fair is an interesting experience and I heard cool things were happening, such as

selling ice cream," she said. "I found all the clubs extremely interesting, and how their culture is distinct yet special. I saw many clubs that interested me, such as robotics. Clubs fair was cool."

Many club executives and members shared positive experiences while compiling numerous activities and demonstrations to attract new members. A unique club at the fair was The Reckoner. The Editor-in-Chief, Sumedh Dhanvanthry, emphasized the importance of student voice and diversity in the school newspaper. "The goal is to get more mainstream involvement, and this year, we had a record number of applications, and we're committed to continuing that in the future. All students are welcome to submit work to be a part of The Reckoner as a guest submission, by emailing editorinchief@thereckoner.com. Or, students can apply to be a staff member next year in September." The Reckoner publishes content from school news to editorial pieces, and the visual arts,

Another eye-catching club was Art Council. As club co-president Hateem described, "The club is a great way for students to collaborate with each other while creating art with each other." In the past, Art Council has taken on great projects, such as creating murals in the

school, designing the Ramadan banner, and making cards for the elderly every year. Students can join Art Council by dropping in at meetings, in room 113 on Tuesday afternoons. Other unique art clubs included Yarn Talk, Musical Theater Club, and Singing Club, each offering entertaining and meaningful activities for students.

Students were also introduced to a wide variety of games. Games club and the Trading Card Game Club (TCG) regularly host activities that provide a relaxing environment for students to play board games or card games respectively. As the Games Club executive put it, "We play various games at school, allowing students, especially new students, to connect with others and foster friendships while playing board games."

Next to the TCG stand was the Robotics Club, which provided activity demonstrations and had many achievements to bolster. Club executive Farooq provided students with valuable information about the club, saying, "We are very proud of our winning robot, which won at our first worlds. At Clubs Fair, we're allowing students to drive a robot, to gain the experience of what we do at Robotics Club. We also have some puzzles for students to solve, which provides an insight into what build-

ers do at the club. Students can join robotics by dropping in Tuesdays or Thursdays after school in room 102.” Like Robotics Club, the Physics Club and the Canadian Young Physicists Tournament Club (CaYPT) teamed up to provide students with a mountain of snacks, a Kahoot game, and a balloon-powered car demonstration.

Down the hall to the Robotics Club was the Black Student Association (BSA). The BSA seeks to open discussion to students on various issues impacting the black community while supporting members and listening to their experiences. Moreover, the BSA educates MGCI on issues relating to the black community, and how students can be allies. During the fair, the club was selling bags of treats in addition to hosting a sports competition and playing music, which attracted a sea of students.

The cafeteria was bustling with students and clubs. One of MGCI’s largest and oldest clubs, Key Club, was also in attendance. Club executive Sarah Li stressed the importance of student service. “We promote student leadership and involvement in the community,” she said. “Even as a youth, when we don’t have the money and independence as adults, we still have time and skills to dedicate to making the world a better place.” Key Club has taken on important projects in the school, such as working with UNICEF, making cards for veterans, hosting a school food drive, selling roses on Val-



Photograph: Nikolas Zahariadis

entine’s Day, providing nearby primary school students with school supplies with the Staples backpack project, planting trees, and organizing an upcoming drive for care packages for the homeless.

Overall, there was a great turnout for the Clubs Fair, with students being inspired to gain new

opportunities and experiences. Provided with such a great opportunity to explore newfound interests, there is a club for all students. With all the fun games, demonstrations, snacks, and opportunities provided, students will have lots of fun joining clubs that they found interesting during Clubs Fair. ■

HOSA - To ILC and Beyond!

by RAY HANG

DECA, FBLA, HOSA. Three clubs, three organisations, three four-letter names.

In the year of 2022, the way is shut for DECA Ontario.

In the year of 2022, the time has passed for FBLA.

In the year of 2022, at the time of writing (25 May), the spotlight now shines on the Health Occupations Students of America.

HOSA is an international student-led organisation aiming to empower and raise the next generation of “Future Health Professionals.” It offers courses and resources for those interested in pursuing a career or interest in the healthcare industry. At MGCI, members register for a specific competitive event of their choosing—of which there are twenty-nine for secondary school students—and practice for the three main conferences that HOSA holds throughout the year.

The first is the Fall Leadership Conference (FLC). This occurs around November and acts as an hors-d’œuvre, allowing members to get a sense of how the competitions work and their current progress in their studies. However, this conference does not include the full as-

pects of many events. As an example, CERT skills only had the written test and did not include the practical demonstration.

The second conference is the Spring Leadership Conference (SLC), the entrée. This is the main conference that the vast majority of members compete in. In 2022, SLC was held entirely online due to ongoing concerns around the global COVID-19 pandemic, and started on 30 April and ended four days later on 4 May. During this time, HOSA Canada held workshops and seminars on topics varying from physical exams to DNA extraction. Members would compete in the first round, if applicable, of their events, and qualifiers would go on to compete in the second round. The top three competitors or teams in each event are then selected to go to the third conference, the International Leadership Conference (ILC). Saivenkat Jilla, a student that participated in the CERT Skills event, comments, “[It] was a good experience, nice of them to still have events even if they have to be virtual.”

This was the second year that HOSA has had to hold the SLC virtually. The competition process bears many similarities to that of the first pandemic year, including using a website grader for the multiple choice test and Zoom calls for live demonstrations, but was overall more streamlined and had fewer compli-

cations during the process. The website was updated and had more robust question-submitting programming than the previous year. As Amy Li, the Vice President of the MGCI HOSA chapter, said, “it was actually a lot nicer than last year.”

HOSA MGCI used the same training regimen as previous years: trainers would provide resources on the events they are teaching and create monthly check-up quizzes (HOSA Days) to make sure the members were on track. Each quiz was approximately 20 questions long. Additionally, several workshops were held addressing events that had live demonstration rounds, such as CPR and Sports Medicine. As Amy put it, it was the “same business as usual.”

This year, HOSA MGCI had nineteen members place in the top ten for their events, with eleven qualifying for the ILC.

Ray Hang Saivenkat Jilla

- 9th, CERT

Bill Yan, Carrie Jiang, Cullen Ye, and Tony Zhang

- 1st, HOSA Bowl

Allan Li, Amy Li, Emma Liu, and William Lin

- 2nd, HOSA Bowl

Grace Zhu, Ivy Liu, Lillian Li, and Yolanda Zhou

- 7th, HOSA Bowl

Maruti Singh

- 7th, Behavioural Health

Lucy Qi

- 3rd, Medical Law and Ethics

Araf Reshad

- 2nd, Nutrition

Amy Jia

- 6th, Researched Persuasive Writing and Speaking

Stephanie Chan

- 2nd, Sports Medicine

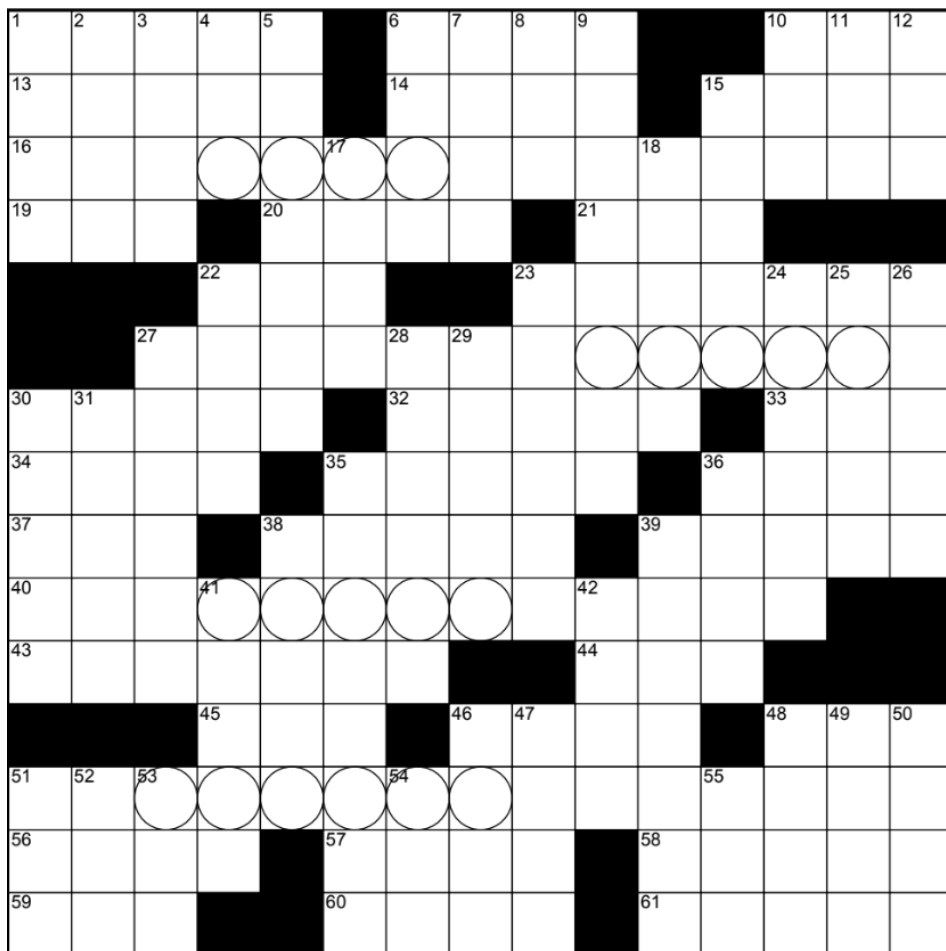
ILC 2022 will be held in Nashville, Tennessee. HOSA MGCI was unfortunately unable to secure teacher supervisors for this trip and will thus be attending ILC as a non-school-affiliated trip. Regardless of this, the competitors are hopeful of their chances. “I’m really glad a lot of my friends qualified and I’m super excited for the late night grinds and getting to explore Nashville, Tennessee!” says Lucy Qi. ■



ILC is hosted at the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center in Nashville, Tennessee.

LIFE BOARD

A board for imaginative self-expression through written and visual content.



ACROSS

- 1 Museum display
6 Chances
10 Be untruthful
13 Napoleon's elder sister
14 Colt mother
15 Cooped, with "up"
16 Bank deposit contaminations?
19 ____ Diego
20 Blue-pencil
21 Flower vessel
22 Zoo inhabitant, abbr.
23 Novelists
27 A nervous singer's performance?
30 Feel in Portugal
32 Valle D'____, in Italy
33 Often torn by athletes, abbr.
34 Technology maturity estimation method developed by NASA in the 70s

- 35 Skunk's defence
36 Grieg's "____ Death"
37 "Let You Love Me" singer
38 Cassette half
39 "Orfeo ed Euridice," e.g.
40 Chocolate-coffee inventor?
43 Tickles
44 Possessive pronoun
45 Wanna-____
46 March; third sister
48 Insipid
51 Luxurious horticulturist hangouts?
56 Coup d'____
57 Museum displays
58 Hammered instruments
59 e, of i.e.
60 Get up
61 Exasperated cry, and a hint to the encircled letters

DOWN

- 1 American Civil War side
2 Fitzgerald and Mai
3 Pride Rock ruler
4 Prefix with -thermal
5 Beat
6 Prefix with -present
7 Punk musical artist?
8 Rap doctor?
9 Word with "blanket" or "guard"
10 Sign of summer
11 Danube feeder
12 UFO crew
15 1492 ship
17 Still
18 McGee, of "Boy Meets World"
22 Hill builders
23 Hot stuff
24 Pencil topper
25 Kitchen gadget
26 Ballroom dance
27 Loosen
28 Hip-hop blueprint, abbr.?
29 Archaic column moldings
30 Trample
31 Flynn of "Captain Blood"
35 Tattooed lady's exhibit
36 Copies
38 MS. enclosures
39 Moving
41 Routine
42 Scrams
46 Greater part
47 Gaelic tongue
48 "Let Me Call You Sweet-heart" singer
49 Building block
50 Set a value on, abbr.
51 1-Down general
52 Twitter symbols
53 Vessel
54 Vardalos, of "My Big Fat Greek Wedding"
55 "Ruh-____!" (Scooby-Doo line)

by FLORA CHEN

Evanesced

by LUCK XING

“It’s dark here.
Why is it so cold?”

Illustration: Akshaya Varakunan

June 26th, 1964 – 2:51pm
Robertson High School

The air conditioning was broken for the sixtieth time this year, except it was 37 degrees today. As everyone stood eagerly in front of the doors, the smell of cologne and sweat overpowered any delights of the last day before summer break; this year has been a particularly wild one. “I’m burning alive,” a kid screamed, I felt a tingle in my right arm as I remembered the fire in my room that scorched me back in April. Science experiments weren’t quite my specialty... The bell rang as I recollected my thoughts.

I couldn’t wait to get home.

June 26th, 1964 – 3:34pm
“Home”

My parents have been out of town for the past few months since the fire, although some people still say weird things about them out of the blue. “Sorry to hear about your parents,” I’ve heard that way too much. It was just a business trip: Of course, I still missed them, but I’m getting way too much credit for a 14-year-old living by himself for a few months. I don’t really mind the extra attention, though; people are surprisingly friendly to me these days. I walked through the kitchen, crowded with younger children trying to get a cookie from the cook, and waltzed into my room. A copy of The Baxter Bulletin’s April edition still sat on my desk; I never got through to organizing my papers from my old boxes. “Two killed and one left with minor burns in Arkansas fire,” the headline read...

Someone must’ve had a bad day.

As much as I miss my old room, at least my parents were still here with me.

June 26th, 1964 – 4:07pm
Post Office

The county fair was in town for the week, and now that school was over, I finally had something to do besides arithmetic for Mrs Fraser. My pen pal, Noel, took up the rest of my time, as the kids from my school were too loud and obnoxious for me; I loved writing letters. Noel also happens to live in Fayetteville, but we had never met up despite being so close to each other. We talk about everything in our letters; I know everything about Noel, from his life, parents, family, to even every corner of his home. He’s always here to listen to me and what I have to say, and we are surprisingly similar sometimes – that’s what I like about him. He always understood me, and I always knew what he was thinking.

It’s almost like we shared the same brain.

I dropped off the letter asking Noel about the county fair over the weekend, but the man at the front desk looked at me weird and told me the address didn’t exist anymore. The tiny post office around my block never seems to get it right; hundreds of times, the man told me the exact same thing – how could the address not be real if Noel writes to me every day from that place? I bought a post stamp and left it in the drop off bin, which always seemed to work.

June 29th, 1964 – 2:30pm

Fayetteville County Fair

Noel and I agreed to meet at the fair today, conveniently a 20-minute walk from home. It was an interesting coincidence that I had met Noel before we even got to the fair, right as I turned the corner from home. We had never met before, but we seemed to recognize each other as we collided on the sidewalk. He was almost like me with his brown hair and a tawny tan, except for his eyes. His iris and pupil are brilliantly black, as dark as the midnight sky. I couldn’t help but shudder at how dark his eyes were, so sharp I almost got lost looking at my own reflection inside them.

The sign at the ticket booths read “County Fair Hours: 1pm to 10pm...” but the crowd’s hustle and bustle flooded Noel and me into the gates before I was able to read anything else. A man handed out guides for the fair: “The Wild West Circus,” “Deep Fried Corn Dogs,” “Henning’s Magic Show,” the list went on and on, from parades to strange toys to all sorts of food. We weren’t even sure where to start.

I followed Noel into the rows and rows of hectic fairgoers.

June 19th, 1964 – 7:47pm
Fayetteville County Fair

The sun had set as darkness had followed. The flickering street lamps cast a dim ray over some of the walkways, just enough to spot the different attractions that were still open.

“Let’s stay a bit longer,” whispered Noel.

*June 19th, 1964 - 9:22pm
Fayetteville County Fair*

The excruciating heat of the blazing sun had left in the footsteps of the last remaining glimpses of sunlight. A cool breeze tickled the tiny hairs on the back of my neck. We came across a fried chicken booth, eerily lit by the sparks of the stove, with obscured rays of light from the lamps piercing through the tarp. Something was strange. Something was off. The hazy fumes from the pot smelled nothing of fried chicken; the putrid burning smell of human flesh filled the booth. The scent was familiar, although I couldn't quite tell from where, as the smoke coated my lungs, leaving a bitter metallic taste in my mouth. I stumbled away from the booth. A faint spark from the fire illuminated the booth briefly, two bright red eyes appeared in the murk amidst the thick black fog.

I broke off into a run, away from the booth in the darkness. I wandered around the seemingly endless fair, one empty path after another, as I broke into a run, hoping to see even the slightest trace of light.

*June 19th, 1964 - 10:03pm
Fayetteville County Fair*

I saw the hint of light, the faint flicker of brightness in the distance. As fast as I could, I ran away from the darkness, from the monsters that hid within. I wandered into a crowd, their backs turned towards me, spectating a show of some kind. I bent down to catch my breath as a sudden scurry of footsteps and the crackling of branches behind

me instinctively drove me to the floor. As I crawled over, Noel's piercing eyes appeared before me.

"I was looking for you all this time, where have you been?"

He seemingly had appeared from the darkness, but I was glad that I at least had someone with me. I had enough of this "fair" thing, enough with the performances, enough with the food, enough with everything. I wanted to go home.

"Let's stay a bit longer; come, I know this perfect stargazing place," he pointed in the direction I had just run from. I felt a strange sense of calmness when I was around Noel, and we were too busy exploring the fair to talk during the day anyway. I followed his lead into the darkness.

*June 19th, 1964 - 11:15pm
Fayetteville County Fair*

We sat down on the cliff as we watched the stars go by, as I talked to Noel about the fire and the scar on my arm. Noel lifted up his sleeve, and I was shocked as I barely made out a scab, which looked almost like mine under the faint moonlight. He was the boy in the newspaper on my desk, the boy who lost his parents in another fire. He explained to me how he had accidentally started the fire and tried putting it out with his clothes, making it worse. How he had run from the house, forgot about his sleeping parents... It was too late. His voice had a tint of a strange raspiness, increasingly stronger with every word he spoke. His black eyes, supernaturally bright

in the darkness, had a tint of something I had never seen before; was it remorse or anger?

The air had frozen, tense as a brick wall. Noel shuffled closer, I could feel his cold breath followed by the empty silence of the darkness. The story was unsettling enough, as I backed away from his gaze and stood up. It was getting late. It was time for me to go.

"Let's stay a bit longer," as he pulled me back.

I wrestled my arm out of his grasp. I turned and started walking away. But there he was, standing directly in front of me. I ran off in another direction.

"Let's stay a bit longer," he breathed.

He was beside me. Everywhere I went, he was there. I ran and ran as if I was running around a track; I could never get away from Noel's dark silhouette under the moonlight. Suddenly a click, followed by the ray of a flashlight. I made out two shadows in the distance. It didn't matter who they were anymore. I ran as fast as I could towards them. I heard his breath behind me, but I dared not look back.

"Leon is that you?" the shadows called out as the spark of light shone on my face and blinded me - I recognized the voice. My parents. How did they know I was at the fair? I leapt hopelessly into their arms with the last bit of energy left in me.

It's dark here.
Why is it so cold?

The Woods Within

by ANDY SUN



Illustration: Ivy Liu

Your home is a pine forest, given
to lightning fires, to needle blankets
and smoky skies. Seed cones drip pitch
down to fern spores while thin saplings
fight for sun. Blight has taken the ironwood
and beech, the storybook oaks.
In spring, candles shoot from your scales.

To sleep here.
Or, to break from the earth
if your roots are shallow.
Beneath the broad-bladed
grass: a worm song.
Those old beeches, their limbs
staggered like hart horns,
they were roped,
the oaks frilled with an ax.
Your bark ripples
as the winds gust.

When the rope and the blade and the coming train,
when your grain is twisted, skin ugly, elephantine,
when you haven't the courage to hang to cut to jump
but instead lie without living, you ask if God,
as many times as you've been spared, has ever interfered.
Remember how you prayed as the tornado approached
and sidestepped your home. The brittle pine frames
of your windows, the billowing wood paneling
on your walls—how are you today, in the same room,
safe and warm? In time, this house will fall like timber
whether or not you're rooted to the bed.
Despite every weakness you've ever felt,
it is up to you to save yourself.

A Walk?

by YOLANDA ZHOU



Illustration: Samara Rahman

One step then the next,
A step, a stumble, another fall
Like a baby learning how to walk,
Out of my house I crawl,
A step, another, then many steps.

Through the grass, beyond the street,
Around the trees and into the park.
A walk, a small stroll across the summer heat.
The cooling wind tastes quite sweet.
As it melts on my tongue under the shady tree,
I'm out, finally out, out of my mind.

A step, a dance
And a wild deer's prance
I'm crazy for air, crazy for freedom,
Watch me gallop the sun
Watch me soar unchained
I'll make this wilderness my kingdom,

A step, another one, and a jumble of words
I dance, I cry, I spread my wings to the sky
Oh, go wild with the clouds and stomp with sun
Inside and out, outside to in.
Drunk with madness and tipsy with fun

Yet as I watch as my soul flies away to the clouds
My body still stays stuck to the ground.
Stepping.

A step, an aimless step
Blinded and soulless walking backwards and bound

Where shall I go when my mind's not there?
Where shall fate take me under the blistering sun
Mindless steps in one way or the other
Stumbling along, smelling my way to the shade
And I walk... still walking, waiting, walking

Waiting until the sun goes down
Waiting until I can return.
Waiting until the fire burns to the ground
And the soul returns to the blind stumbling maniac.

Growing Pains

by LISA ZHANG



4 Years old

My mommy takes me to school. She says I need to do good there. I don't really get what school is for, but I don't like it. I don't get to see mommy or daddy all day. And I can't talk to my big brother either. When I get home, mommy makes me tell her everything we learned.

5 Years Old

A weird lady always comes to our house now. She's always giving my brother books with lots of numbers in them. Mommy gets mad at him a lot now. Sometimes I think I can hear him crying in his room. Sometimes, when mommy is mad, daddy will take me to buy ice cream. My favourite flavour is unicorn. Daddy says that it doesn't exist. I don't believe him.

6 Years Old

I'm finally in grade 1. That means I can play on the field now. I think my brother should be here too. But I can't ever find him. I think he's inside. Mommy met my best friend yesterday. I don't think she liked him, she got mad at me. I'm not allowed to play with him anymore. Daddy was crying yesterday, I think grandma is sick.

7 Years Old

Mommy makes me dress up for my brother's graduation. I think he's going into middle school. She hit me when I didn't want to wear a tie. Then daddy came really late. He missed my brother on the stage. He also was really stinky. The other people were staring at him because he was acting funny. Mommy didn't talk to him the next day.

8 Years Old

The weird lady with the math books comes everyday now. I think she's called a tutor. Mommy put one of his tests on the fridge yesterday. She got mad when I showed her my test. She said it wasn't perfect. Maybe I should try harder, I don't want mommy to be mad. Daddy wasn't home today again. He's always stinky though. I think he was drinking that bubbly thing called beer. It's a little scary.

9 Years Old

Grandma died. We went to her funeral yesterday. It was scary to see daddy cry a lot. He wasn't drunk for once. But he didn't come home that night.

10 Years Old

I'm graduating elementary school today. But my brother's middle school graduation is also today. Daddy was supposed to come to my graduation. I don't see him. So I look at the pretty ceiling instead. Mommy is late to pick me up after the party. I think she forgot.

11 Years Old

Highschool doesn't seem fun. My brother always comes home late. He's always doing homework. My mom got mad at him yesterday. Again. I think he was late to his first class. I'm learning with the tutor now. She's really annoying. The math is also really hard to learn. My mom gets mad every time I don't understand it fast enough. My dad gets mad when she yells.

12 Years Old

My dad was really drunk last night. I bumped into him by accident and he hit me. My mom saw the bruise and she panicked. She made me put foundation on to hide it. I don't get why she's so worked up. It's not like she hasn't done worse.

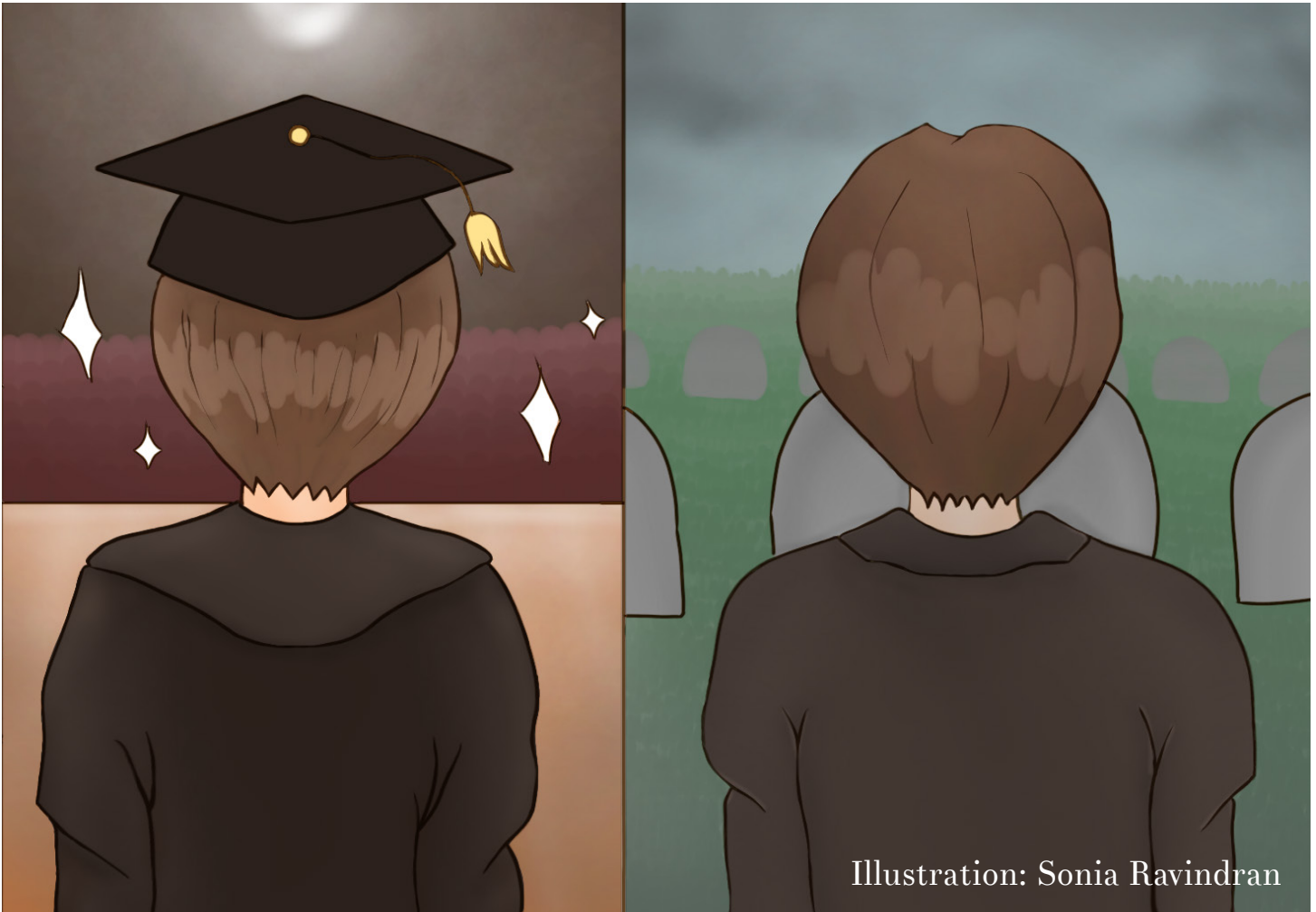


Illustration: Sonia Ravindran

13 Years Old

I graduated middle school yesterday. I'm really scared to go to high school, seeing how my brother is all day. No one came but I wasn't surprised. I knew my mom would be too busy with my brother's extracurriculars. My dad hasn't been sober enough to do anything lately. My mom freaked out when I told her to get him help this morning. That set off my dad again. This time, he hit her instead.

14 Years Old

My brother's graduating in a couple weeks. He's going off to college soon. My mom was the happiest I've ever seen her when she saw the acceptance letter. My brother only looked upset. She was extra strict on me last night. I know she wants me to do even better. My brother's earned a lot of money from competitions and awards. He never uses it though. I've never asked him where the money went.

15 Years Old

These days I'm always home alone. My brother left for college yesterday. My mom is always busy and my dad is usually too drunk to make it home from whatever bar he's at. I don't look for him. I don't stop him when he hits my mom. Some sick part of me thinks she deserves it. He hits me too, I don't have enough energy to stop him. My mom's always screaming when he does that. She's always telling him to be quiet, not for him to stop. She'll tell him to stop if he's hitting her though.

16 Years Old

I got a letter today. I never get those. It was from my brother. He left home. Permanently. Left as in he wasn't coming back. No more spring break visits, no more Christmases. Not that we got gifts but still. He left me. At least now I know where his competition money went. That night, I hide the letter from my mom. She only notices something is wrong when my brother stops answering his phone. He's not answering mine either. But my mom checks my phone so I think I know why he won't talk. I don't think my dad notices anything different.

He never does.

17 Years Old

I graduated yesterday. My mom is preparing me for college. It's all too stressful, but I can't muster the courage my brother had to leave. So instead I follow her. I let her pick my outfit, bring me to the car, and drive me to the campus. And I go into class. I get my perfect grades. I make my mother proud. Like my brother couldn't. I'm too much of a coward to leave. I hate him. He left me to fill his shoes. He couldn't even fill them himself.

24 Years Old

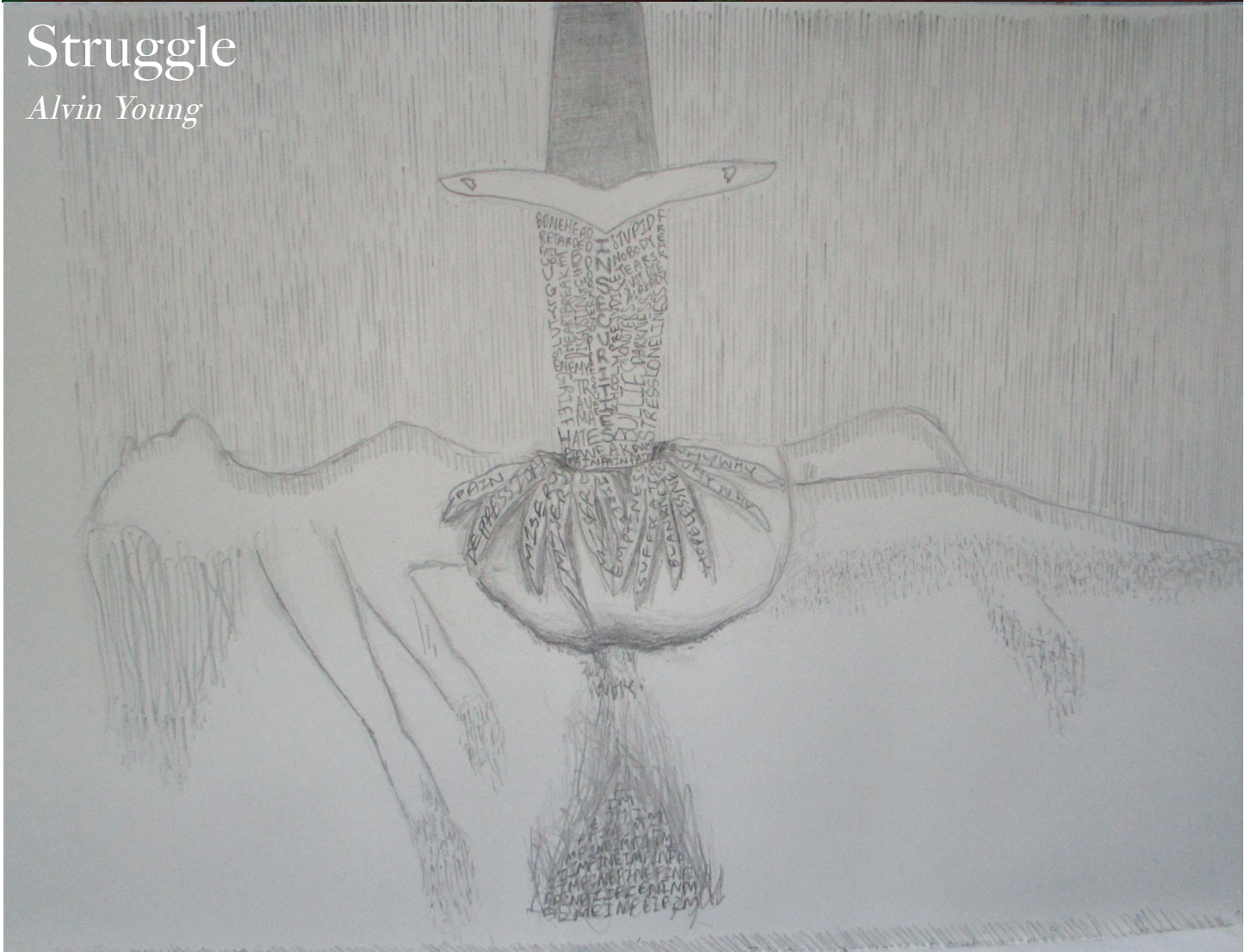
I saw my brother at a cafe. We stared at each other for a while. Then I left. He never followed. He couldn't have caught up even if he tried. There was already too much distance between us.

34 Years Old

My mother passed away last week. I went to her funeral but I didn't feel enough to cry. I didn't see my dad. Haven't in years. My mother never got to meet her grandkids. I made sure of it. ■

Oriana Zhou

Alvin Young





blue

Amy Long

EDITORIAL BOARD

A board that amplifies student voices through supported opinions.

PETA is Too Extreme

OP-ED by ANDREW XU

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, or PETA, is the largest animal rights group in the world, with more than 9 million members and supporters worldwide [1]. I initially supported PETA because they are strongly against dog fighting and other forms of needless animal cruelty [2]. However, the more I looked into their organization, the more skeptical I got, until one day I completely disliked PETA.

To start with, their publications are often false or not backed up by evidence. PETA has pushed the outlandish arguments, such as milk causes autism [4] or giving meat to children is like letting them smoke cigars [5]. There is just too much disinformation to name. It is understandable that they want to convince more people to join their cause, but amplifying lies is just not acceptable.

Most people would think it would be a good idea to take animals into PETA's shelter.

After all, they are an animal rights organization. Unfortunately, PETA actually has a troubling high euthanization rate. In 2014, PETA's shelter euthanized 81% of its animals. In some previous years, the percentage was more than 90%. The situation was so nasty, the Virginia State legislature had to pass a bill to rein in PETA and other irresponsible animal shelters [6]. All of this, as you would imagine, drew a lot of criticism. PETA, as always, published articles to defend their actions. Their main argument was that they are a "shelter of last resort" and that they would accept all surrendered pets, even those in very bad health conditions [7]. However, this defense is flawed. While no-kill shelters could choose which pets they accept, almost all other shelters take in every stray or surrendered animal, just like what PETA claimed as a "shelter of last resort" [8]. Also, "shelter of last resort" is really not how you justify a 90% euthanization rate.

Besides, the organization is against animal testing. Ingrid Newkirk, the president of PETA, once said that even if animal research resulted in a cure for AIDS, "we'd be against it." [9] It seems that she almost forgot humans are also animals. On their website, they claim we can simply replace domesticated mice with fake replicas, like human-patient simulators [10]. However, animals typically have trillions of cells [11]. Completely replacing animal testing is impossible from a purely mathematical perspective. To test a vaccine, for example, you also have to recreate the immune, cardiovascular, nervous, respiratory, muscular, and all sorts of other systems to check the body's response [12]. Good luck with that!

Lastly, PETA is known to produce appalling video advertisements. For example, they compared the American Kennel Club to the Ku Klux Klan [13]. They also made a video ad that essentially said people who don't adopt from



PETA volunteers protesting the wool industry - BBC News (<https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-49578130>)

shelters are dog murderers [14].

These are not the only things PETA does. They have made some claims and actions that are too nauseous to be included here. All in all, PETA is too extreme to be taken seriously. The best we can do is ignore them and support other organizations like the World Wildlife Fund. ■

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Hikikomori: A Tale of Social Isolation

GUEST SUBMISSION by ADIB RAED

Many of us are familiar with the idea that the harder you work, the more successful you will be in the future. But is that necessarily true? As competition in our society becomes more fierce, people are starting to realize that slaving away long arduous hours at their jobs is not what they want in their lives. In the end, some give up completely and become recluses, unable to face their friends and family.

Perhaps you have heard about the Sampo generation in South Korea, the *nini* youth of Latin America, or the hikikomori population in Japan, but they all refer to the same idea. Japan's case, however, is the most well-known as they have tackled this challenge for decades [1]. The term 'hikikomori' is defined by the government as a person who has physically isolated themselves from society for at least six months; it is common for such people to be unemployed for years at a time. Surveys show that Japan has a hikikomori population of over a million, but experts suggest that the number might even surpass ten million due to the nature of these people to stay hidden [2]. Although under the guise of a harmless phenomenon, the hikikomori lifestyle is destructive to the physical and mental health of workers. If we want to avoid detrimental long-term effects to society, we need to learn to be more transparent with each other, and foster mutually beneficial relationships among workers and employees.

There is a misconception that the increase in computer use is why some people tend to shut themselves at home. Others blame modern parenting

techniques; accusing parents of pampering their children to the point that they refuse to face the hardships of society. Yet many of these claims can be easily refuted. Hikikomori have been known to exist since the early 1990s, while the internet did not gain extensive popularity until the turn of the century, showing that technology is at best only one of the factors influencing it, but not the root cause [3]. Furthermore, studies show that only 34.1% of hikikomori depend on their parents financially; the majority of hermits are able to survive on their own, or via other means such as government welfare [4]. When you combine this with the fact that 613,000 out of the known one million recluses were found to be between the ages of 40 and 64, it seems unlikely that parents are influencing such behaviour. It is important to note the difference between correlation and causation; it is more probable that hikikomori turn to technology and their parents when they are already in need of help.

So what is causing such an alarming number of social hermits?

The most important reason causing an influx of people who don't want to hold jobs is the fact that many employers enforce *karoshi*, which literally translates to "overwork death". Countries such as Japan and China have recently come under fire for the practice of "996" — the idea that people should work from nine in the morning to nine at night, six days a week, often without overtime pay [5]. Although laws exist to prevent workers from working over the standard 40 hours

a week, such rules are rarely, if ever, enforced. Many corporate heads still defend the 996 ideal, with billionaire business mogul Jack Ma even calling it a "huge blessing" for his workers. However, long working hours is now the leading factor in occupational deaths, killing over a quarter of a million people each year worldwide [6]. Yet, we continue to glorify this practice and equate it with success — and when people quit toxic jobs, they are shunned by society with terms such as "lazy" and "entitled" [7].

If we are to change this mentality, we first need to alter people's attitude towards work. Anyone who has been to Japan is probably familiar with the local saying "the nail that sticks up gets hammered down." From school children being taught specific rules on how to raise their hand in class, to employees learning the proper angle to bow to their superiors, Japan's conformist culture is ingrained in every walk of life [8]. This pressure to fit in with others greatly contributes to the extremely harsh work climate that the country is infamous for; it is the idea that, if my superiors are not leaving work before midnight, how can I?

One way that we have been able to quantify the extent to which this affects employees is through the number of paid vacation days taken. A study by Expedia in 2018 showed that Japan ranked the lowest among all countries surveyed in terms of using their leave. Akina Murai, the head of Expedia Japan, commented on this issue, saying that "younger employees want and see the need to take more vacation, but are challenged by their

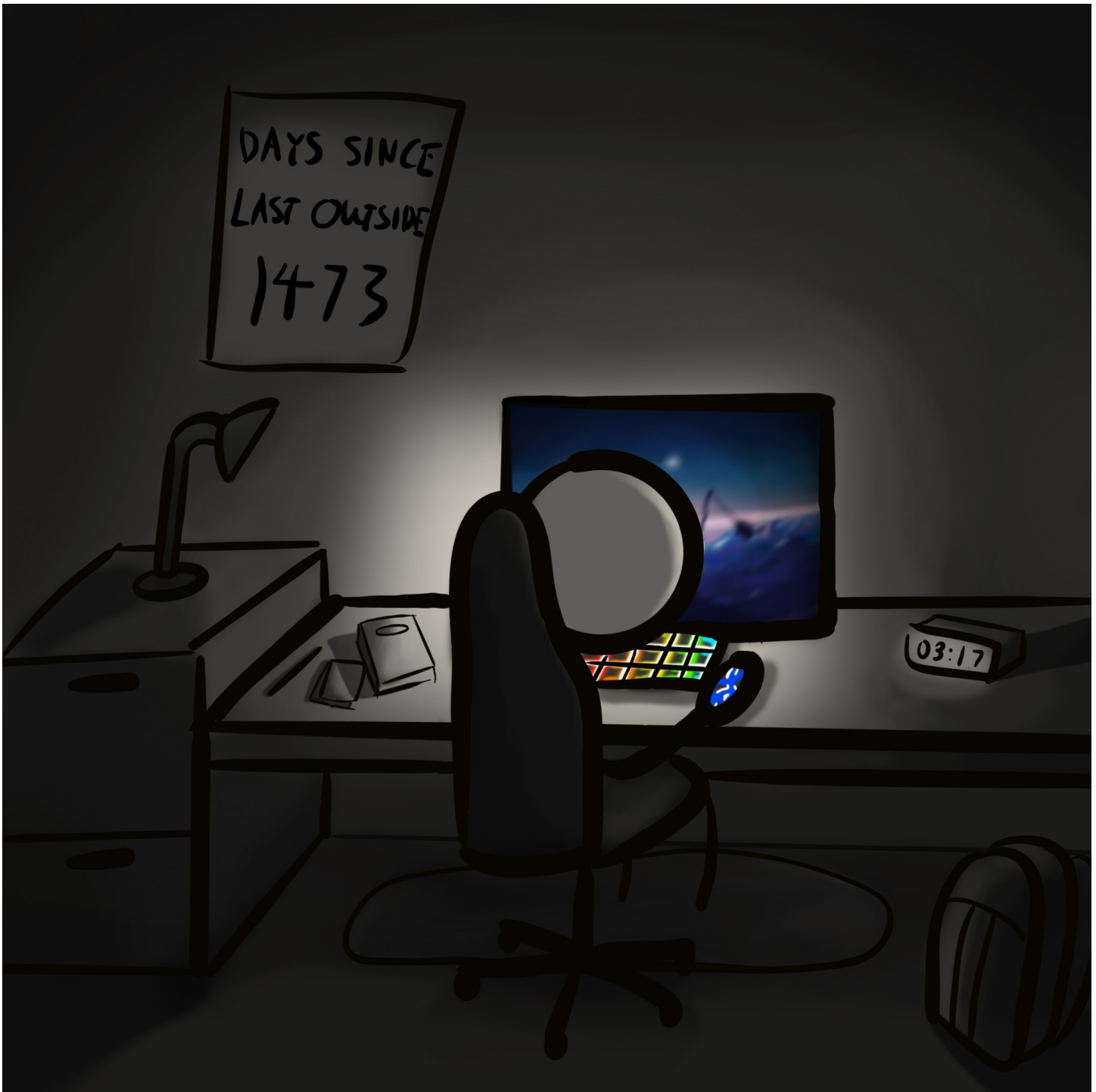


Illustration: Max Lu

superiors who do not think or operate in the same manner” [9]. Laws are not enough to fix this issue, as the problem lies with the mindset of the public.

By learning to communicate effectively, we can take the first steps needed to make sure everyone’s voices are heard, and their needs are being met. Japan, being a country where more people

die of suicide than of COVID-19 and the only country to appoint a ‘loneliness minister,’ is more than behind other countries in this regard [10]. Yoshie Komura, founder of Work Life Balance Ltd., believes that “once employees get used to communicating with each other positively, sharing information within the team, helping each other, and confirm-

ing that taking days off would not impact their evaluation negatively, they start taking more holiday leave”. Yet this idea of opening up about your needs to others is still an extremely daunting task for many.

China faced its own hikikomori problem in April 2021, when thousands of Chinese netizens posted pictures of themselves

“lying flat,” symbolizing their unwillingness to participate in society and to protest against unfair working conditions. Thousands encouraged each other to quit their jobs and enjoy life without all the hustle and bustle. However, the government’s first response was not to hear the public’s demands, but instead to silence them [11]. How can people be comfortable talking about their own problems if they are constantly afraid of being reprimanded by their peers, their employers, or even their government? “The battle for perception should not be a substitute for actually making improvement,” remarked Dr. Alok Kanojia, a Harvard-trained psychologist [12]. No amount of censorship or PR firms can ever fix a problem that is embedded so deeply in how society functions. Until companies and the government are willing to listen to the people, they are only making things worse by hiding the real situation.

Perhaps the most ironic aspect of this matter is that by overworking their employees, big corporations and the government are just as affected as everyone else. As more people feel overwhelmed and begin quitting their jobs, it will inevitably change the collective mindset of the new generation to one that places a lot less significance on the traditional values of “success”. People are starting to realize that they don’t need high-paying jobs to fuel their material desires, especially if those jobs come at the expense of their mental and physical health. Associate professor Dr. Gavin Chiu describes this as the “middle-income trap,” that many countries are steadily heading towards right now [13]. As more and more people lose the motivation to apply for higher-paying jobs and middle-income jobs be-

come the norm, a country’s economic growth will slowly start to stagnate.

We can already see this happening in Japan, where it is becoming increasingly harder for employers to fill management roles [14]. 30 years ago, 40% of eligible employees took exams to apply for managerial positions, yet this number has now dwindled down to a mere 14%. China is also being affected, as people are becoming unwilling to work in the extremely demanding technological sector [15]. General Secretary Xi Jinping is very vocal about wanting to make China technologically independent, but his ambitions may have to come to a halt if people are unwilling to work in an industry where “competition is unrelenting.” Pushing people to their limits in order to further a corporate agenda benefits no one, not even the corporations themselves.

Our world does not need to be one where only the fittest survive and the rest are forced to the point of giving up. Hikikomori may just be a small fraction of the population, but their increase in numbers represent where we could be heading in the future if we do not heed the warning signs. Our society must learn to draw the line so that competition does not tread on our ability to survive. There needs to be a compromise between what employers want and how much employees can perform, but such a middle ground cannot be reached if we are not willing to listen. Only when we realize that the workers’ interests are not mutually exclusive from their employers — that people’s well-being equates to the well-being of society as a whole — can we put behind a past filled with trauma and pain, and walk a path of understanding. ■

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Letter From the Editor

Dear reader,

The cliché rings true—this impossibly slow school year has somehow flown by in the blink of an eye. Though the time has now come for me to walk away from The Reckoner, the four years I've spent as a staff member of this publication have instilled skills, values, and lessons in me that will certainly inform my future.

To our staff advisors this year: Ms. Lajeunesse, Mr. Pearce, Ms. Woodley, and Ms. Grant, thank you for your interest and support in enabling us to run an equitable newspaper that serves the school gracefully.

To Mahan Nekoui and Kasra Koushan, two among The Reckoner's four core founders in 2011: Thank you for your kind mentorship and interest in this newspaper's success. Your conversation illuminated the notion that The Reckoner exists to serve the student body now. It must change hands with each passing year, and the responsibility of the Editor-in-Chief is to dedicate themselves to the education, enrichment, and empowerment of Marc Garneau C.I.'s population for as long as they have the right to represent the student body.

Thus, as the end of my high school experience draws near, I am totally grateful for the challenges and learning curves that working on this publication has brought about. At times, it demanded more of me than I thought possible to give. But there are no struggles that do not have lessons to offer, and there are no lessons learned without a struggle. The late nights and early mornings have, of course, been worth it all along. To any staff member who may be entertaining the idea of pursuing a leadership role within The Reckoner, I encourage you to do so. As long as you understand and serve the role of The Reckoner within MGCI, you will find it a valuable experience.

To the Eleventh Guard's staff: I am grateful to each of you for serving to support our school's community. I am as honoured now to have been a part of The Reckoner as I was when I got an email in October of 2018 letting me know I had been accepted into the Life Board of the school newspaper I had read so many great things about. This newspaper could not exist without the contributions of our journalists, writers, illustrators, artists, photographers, web developers, print developers, and outreach staff. You are the voice. I hope you continue to handle your roles with care.

To my executive team: Your responsibility, initiative, and counsel have made our work this year all the more enjoyable. I certainly would have burnt this paper to a crisp if not for your support. Thank you.

I trust that Allyson will be a great leader for The Reckoner, and I wish the Twelfth Guard nothing but the best. The paper will have my continued confidence.

Yours,

Sumedh Dhanvanthry
Editor-in-Chief



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