

# INSIGHT 2018



## The New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning Learner Writing Contest



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# INSIGHT

## Volume Four, 2018

### *New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning*

This is the fourth year NJALL has held a learner writing contest. Each year we have received about 75 submissions from all around the state. In English and Language Arts circles, the idea of *compositional risk* refers to the act of putting your work out there for others to see, and we are always moved by what these writers have chosen to share with us. Whether a writer's submission received an award or not, we hope that the process of refining their work and taking the big step to submit it to the contest was a rewarding and learning experience.

For the fourth year in a row we invited some of the contest winners to present their work at the annual NJALL conference. The learners read from their winning submissions and then took questions from those in attendance. As always, conference participants were moved and impressed by the learners' work. The learners on the panel answered a lot of questions about how they approach writing and many ideas were shared that can be used in the classroom. We hope that the teachers who were in attendance encourage their own students to take part in next year's contest and we hope you consider attending the learner writing contest panel at next year's NJALL conference.

Thanks again to all the writers, teachers and reviewers that made this magazine possible. We look forward to reading the submissions for next year's contest and we hope to receive even more submissions.

Erik Jacobson

*Chair, NJALL Learner Writing Contest*

Additional 2018 Reviewers: Melissa Backes, Barbara Trueger

# NJALL Adult Learner Writing Contest

## Previous Winners

2015

### Memoir

<i>First Place</i>	Meekko Jones	<i>Upon Reflection</i>
<i>Second Place</i>	Vjollca Rexhapi	<i>My Story: Dedicated to My Dad</i>
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### Poetry

<i>First Place</i>	Ronald Fils-Aime	<i>Before 1804</i>
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### Non-Fiction

<i>First Place</i>	Lara Pointner	<i>The Irony of "Social" Media and "One World"</i>
<i>Second Place</i>	Jazmin Benavides	<i>Someplace Else I Long To Be</i>
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### Fiction

<i>First Place</i>	Dianne George	<i>An Empty Home</i>
<i>Second Place</i>	Nevonne Tyndall	<i>Touched By An Angel</i>
<i>Third Place</i>	Mirly Paul	<i>Monologue With Two</i>

# NJALL Adult Learner Writing Contest

## Previous Winners

2016

### Memoir

<i>First Place</i>	Barry Batts	<i>Rising Above</i>
<i>Second Place</i>	Anonymous	<i>A Day in the Life Of...</i>
<i>Third Place</i>	Beralia Briceno	<i>Childhood Memories</i>

### Poetry

<i>First Place</i>	Alyssa Davis	<i>Goodbye Letter</i>
<i>Second Place</i>	Fernanda Contreras	<i>A Christmas Letter</i>
<i>Third Place</i>	George Aguero	<i>Drifting Into Eternal Slumber</i>

### Non-Fiction

<i>First Place</i>	Christine Coffineau	<i>Too Much Stuff</i>
<i>Second Place</i>	Chelsea Acquino	<i>I Believe in Sleep</i>
<i>Third Place</i>	Charles Brown	<i>Untitled</i>

### Fiction

<i>First Place</i>	Clifford Henry	<i>Confused Young Man</i>
<i>Second Place</i>	Charles Brown	<i>Untitled</i>
<i>Third Place</i>	Andre Allen	<i>Winter's Surprise</i>

### Photography

<i>Co-Winners</i>	Maricela Sandoval	Anzhela Lukianova
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# NJALL Adult Learner Writing Contest

## Previous Winners

2017

### Memoir

<i>First Place</i>	Abir Alkus	<i>I Would Become My Dreams</i>
<i>Second Place</i>	Faten Atfa	<i>The Experience of Deciding to Leave My Country and Come to the US</i>
<i>Third Place</i>	Jouseth Coba	<i>It Is Time</i>

### Non-Fiction

<i>First Place</i>	Raymond Crowthers	<i>I'll Take the Carcinogenic Bottle, Please</i>
<i>Second Place</i>	Estaban Morales	<i>Anger: A Call for Healing</i>
<i>Third Place</i>	Kaven Townsend	<i>The Tree</i>

### Fiction

<i>First Place</i>	Maritza Chang	<i>Airam the Fairy</i>
<i>Second Place</i>	Clifford Henry	<i>Son and Dad</i>
<i>Third Place</i>	Cory D'Amore	<i>Wake Me Up When September Ends</i>

### Poetry

<i>First Place</i>	Agapito Garcia	<i>A Plea for the Consideration of the Contrary</i>
<i>Second Place</i>	Agapito Garcia	<i>At Least I'm Not Mariah</i>
<i>Third Place</i>	Fernanda Contreras	<i>I'm Waiting for You</i>

### Photography

<i>First Place</i>	Alicia Veleriano	<i>The Turtle</i>
<i>Second Place</i>	Maria Greco	<i>Untitled</i>
<i>Third Place</i>	Faten Atfa	<i>Looking for Hope</i>



## 2018 Award Winners - Memoir

### First Place

#### *Yes, I'd Love to Have Some More Mom*

**Seung Kim**

What were the most common words you ever heard from your parents when you were a child? If I asked my friends this question, most of them might have answered; “Did you do your homework?” or “Go to your room and study.” For me, my mother’s shouting “Seung Hui, come here and eat this!” was the one.

I don’t remember her yelling at me to do my homework or study when I was a school girl. However, she always made sure I had eaten three meals a day and some snacks she had prepared. Every morning, a bowl of hot soup and warm rice was set on the dining table. She never missed my breakfast. Even when I went to school at 7 in the morning, she got up early to prepare breakfast and made sure I ate before leaving. She sometimes went out to eat with her friends, but she always prepared my meals first.

When my family had a meal together, my mother would give the best part of fish to my father and then the second-best part to my sister and me. She sometimes didn’t touch the fish at all. I asked her one night, “Do you not like fish? Why are you not eating it?” She smiled and answered, “While cooking it, I get tired of the smell. I don’t want to smell it any more. You eat it.” After dinner, I saw she was eating what was left, not much except for the head and tail of the fish. It took many years for me to learn she actually loved fish. She just wanted to give her family most of the food back then.

Even after I got married and moved out, she didn’t change at all. Whenever I visited her, she offered me lots of food. She often watched me eating with a proud and happy smile on her face. After a while, she always asked me, “Do you want some more?”

Well, I am sure my mother is not the only person who is quite obsessed with feeding her children. A humorous Korean saying goes, “The biggest obstacle to losing weight is your mother.” I surely agree with it.

I guess one of the reasons mothers are so worried about their children's meals is that when the parents were young, food was scarce in Korea. Older generations still greet each other, asking "Have you eaten?" This is like "Hello, how are you?" in English.

Younger people, including me, don't use this expression much any more. We live in the era of worrying about obesity and overeating. This shows the fast economic development of Korea and its impact on the generation gap. Now that I think of it, I am sad to see the value of food fading and the way we care for each other changing. The younger generation might be more excited when they get extra money or a new cell phone than getting three meals a day cooked by their loving mothers.

I didn't always appreciate it, either. When I was going on a weight loss diet, my mother's "Come here and eat this!" really bothered me. I used to come up with some good excuses to avoid it and say no to the food she offered. When I refused to eat, she looked sad and disappointed which made me feel quite guilty.

Now I am older than my mother was when she had me and raised me. I can finally see her objectively from a woman's viewpoint. Now I realize how much she has sacrificed for the family. Also, her "Come here and eat this!" is her way of saying "I love you." and "I care about you." Still, I will never be able to fathom the depth of her love.

In late August of 2017, I was on the bus to the airport to catch a flight, heading for the states. I already said farewell to my parents and was waiting for the bus to leave. Unexpectedly, I saw my mother walking to the bus again, holding a plastic bag. Without saying anything but with a slightly sad smile, she almost threw the bag to me from the bus's entrance and hurried out. It was a bag of Danish pastries she just bought outside of the terminal. She must have been worried about me skipping lunch on the bus. I felt a lump in my throat and no words came out of my mouth. I was sure she felt the same way. No words were spoken but the image of her sorrowful smile and the bag of pastries kept telling me "I love you" again and again all the way to the airport. The voice in my head still resonates with me.

All of the memories of my mother and her shouting "Come here and eat this!" makes me miss her so much. I can't wait to hear it again when I go back home. Next time when I hear it, I will give her a big hug and whisper, "Thank you. I love you." Then, while finishing a bowl of rice, I will gladly say, "I'd love to have some more, mom."

## Second Place

### *Walmart Adventures*

**Amber Sabados**

I swore to myself that I would not become attached to anyone. Growing up, I often moved and transferred schools. When I started high school in one more new town, I planned to just focus on my studies, because I knew I would most likely have to move once again. One day, something made me break my promise.

At the bus stop, there was a girl with short curly hair crying. I recognized her from the hallways at school. I approached Tabitha and asked her why she was so upset — she was going through her first break up.

I sat next to her on the bus as she explained the situation. I sympathized with her and asked if she would like my companionship. We wound up hanging out that entire afternoon! Tabby and I walked around town, talking for hours. It turned out that we had a lot in common — from our unusual taste in music to our sarcastic sense of humor.

Fast-forward two years: I moved again. Many events then occurred, which drastically changed my life.

My father stopped talking to me. There are no words to fully describe the massive impact this had on me. Shortly after, my mother became *extremely* sick. As a result, I dropped out of high school, so my older brother and I could become her caregivers.

Even though Tabby lived 30 minutes away, she was there for me through all of it. It was comforting to know that I had someone to count on during the tough times.

We have been best friends for almost four years — time flies. We've gone on plenty of adventures and created many memories.

One of our favorite times together was walking to Walmart on an extremely cold day. We wound up sitting for hours, avoiding the freezing wind that was awaiting us outside. In that time, we read a book of poetry called *Milk & Honey* by Rupi Kaur. That book changed our perspective on life. This is one of our favorite pieces from *Milk & Honey*:

*balance*

i thank the universe  
for taking away  
everything it has taken  
and giving to me  
everything it is giving (Kaur, p.129)

We're like sisters; speaking each and every day. If we're ever feeling down, we know we can call each other and laugh for hours.

Over the years, our friendship has taught me many things. The most important is to welcome and embrace changes. The other lesson I learned is to try and not make promises, because the future is unpredictable. Even though I moved once again, we continue to be close friends. Things don't always go the way you think they might. I'm appreciative of that because, otherwise, I wouldn't have this wonderful person in my life.

**Third Place*****Imaginary Friend*****Tammy Byrd**

Everybody has a imaginary friend. I met my friend around eight years old, in the beginning I didn't know what was going on. I thought the boogie was going to get me, but she said she wouldn't hurt me she wants to play with me. We did everything together playing, laughing, talking. Our favorite was school and tea time. We had fun in class and at lunch everyday. One day my mom says we're going on a family vacation. I couldn't wait to get there so me and my friend could run around and have fun it took forever for us to get there soon as we pulled up in the driveway, I jumped out the car starting running full speed to nowhere. Later on that day I remember me and my cousins were playing softball and he hit the ball toward me "I got it" I yelled running for the ball, but I didn't have it. I ran face first into a tree. I could hear someone talking to me but I couldn't make out what they was saying so i asked is that you friend, what, who is friend. I'm your cousin. I'm sad to say I never heard from friend again.

## **Third Place**

### *They Fought for Our Country*

**Shirley Williams**

Every time I come to a house I used to see that particular thing you hung in the window to let you know you have someone in the service . . . . To let us all know.

We had five in our window and then we were little. We would write them. They were overseas. They had V mail it was called. Because it was like a little pad with their writing on it and when they sent a letter back it looked like it had shrunk. They cut things out. I learned a lot about the WAR then. So in our family one was in the Army, one was in the Army Air Force and the other three in other services.

My cousin Lawrence was at Tuskegee. He ended up being a navigator. And he used to tell me the indignities. It is unbelievable what they had to go through to fight for their country. Most of the men at Tuskegee were very light, but when they went into town, they couldn't eat.... Even though Uncle Sam said it was all right, the Tuskegee Force did not. So in the meantime he finally came out.

And when he died he was 90...Guess what? The Air Force came. This gentleman.... He was a General dressed in street clothes and because of the horrible things he went through, they gave him a medal. When I was at the funeral the Air Force General came in and gave him his medal. At least in death he got to wear it. It's like that in his death he got his wings.

He was 21 when he went to Washington, DC to get a job in the government. Most of my relatives worked in the government in some way. His daughter worked for the CIA. I had an uncle who worked at the Arsenal. Because of that he could not hear well, but they took him anyway and sent him too and later to the boot of Italy. The GIs were important there.

Cousin Jimmy was at Normandy. They sent his group up. He told me about the groups of Frenchmen and Canadians and Englishmen that were mowed down as they jumped from boats or climbed up cliffs. The Germans were waiting. He said it was rough, and that he was lucky to come home in good shape.

His friend Joe Stanley was a mapmaker in Europe. And we were supposed to have no brains!

Later I had a little brother that went to Korea.

Our son went to school to be a pilot and went to Vietnam. He could not grasp the fact that they would not let them fly, and then he came back with Agent Orange.

My father was a cook in the army for World War I. He was part of the backbone of our service. When he got back from Europe, he wanted to get a job back here. But they gave him a job in the basement. People of color worked in the basement back then.

## 2018 Award Winners - Non-Fiction

### First Place

#### *Malala – Living Legend*

**Guprest Bhatia**

“Please God, please save Malala,” my mother was praying, as we were watching breaking news on the news channel, “Malala Yousafzai has been shot in an assassination attempt by the Taliban”. Malala is a 15years old Pakistani girl who had written an anonymous BBC blog titled “Life Under The Taliban” in 2009, when she was 11 years old.

“Hmmm.....How beautiful she is, especially her brown eyes.”, My mother whispered, “What would they achieve by killing such an innocent girl?”

The whole world condemned this terrorist attack in 2012, as this innocent girl was fighting for her life.....as millions of people prayed for her. She was in a very precarious condition after she was shot. Her first surgery was performed in Pakistan, but her condition was still critical. So the governments of Pakistan and United Kingdom mutually decided to shift her to Queen Elizabeth Hospital of Birmingham, England for advanced treatment.

After they moved her, my mother and I often discussed and sympathized with the experiences which she had written about in her diary. In her diary, she shared how terrorists took control over Swat, the river valley district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Taliban terrorists had started ruling this area and putting severe restrictions on educating girls, owning TV, and playing music, which led to many public executions. This led to considerable fear in the minds of the local people and caused them to flee from their homes and relocated to other parts of the country.

After reading her diary, The New York Times also featured a short documentary titled, “The Death of Female Education.” This documentary showed, the initial struggle of her family, how Malala had changed her location in four cities in a month with her mother and siblings. Her father was still in Peshawar as a protester, and pressured government to take action against terrorists and bring Swat back to its normal life. This documentary revealed, how US allied forces fought against the Taliban and eliminated the terrorists from

Swat Valley. After the Taliban's elimination, all the families including Malala's family, returned to the Swat Valley. According to them, Swat was not looking as beautiful as before, everything was demolished, normal life was disrupted and more than 200 schools were destroyed.

There in Swat, Malala started campaigning for girls' right to education openly through local and international media. In 2011, she won Pakistan's National Youth Peace Prize, which was introduced for the first time. One year after receiving the honor, Malala was shot in the head by Taliban gunmen.

"What's wrong if girls want to be educated, watch TV and listen to music?" I asked my mother.

My Mother answered, "This is the basic right that every child should have...but due to filthy thinking of some wicked and radicalized people, gender equality and girl education are not important, but they are only concerned about their own selfish motives. Women have already proven their abilities all over the world by becoming presidents, governors, scientists, doctors and engineers and are standing shoulder to shoulder with men in every aspect of life. Malala at such a young age understands that women's education will lead to women empowerment that will enable them to reach new heights of their careers in various facets of life. We should commend the efforts that Malala already has bravely communicated to the whole world."

I was really convinced with each and every word that my mother expressed and felt some calmness in my heart.

After this incident, people from all avenues of life started supporting Malala. There were huge peace rallies undertaken in support of Malala and they disowned the evil deeds of terrorists with such statements as "Malala our prayers are with you" and "Shame on you Taliban."

The United Nations had also launched a worldwide campaign for girls' education named, "I am Malala." Various renowned people across the world also supported her such as The US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton appreciated her blog. Singer Madonna shouted Malala's name and dedicated a song to her during one of her live stage performances.

In July 2013, nine months after being shot, Malala was again in the breaking news. It was her 16th birthday and she was standing in the United Nations giving an inspirational

speech. I immediately paused the TV and called my mom excitedly. We both listened to her speech wherein she reminded everyone about her experiences under the Taliban and reiterated that the world needs to come together against these terrorists and provide an environment of peace, love, and the right to education every child. She ended her speech with the very inspirational words that “One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the whole world.”

Listening to her speech my mom and I were both brimming with tears.

In 2014, for all her contributions, she was awarded The Nobel Peace Prize and became the youngest person to receive such a prestigious award.

Malala’s inspirational journey from a simple school-going girl to The Nobel Peace Prize winner shows that if you have the grit and determination, you can change the perspective of life and leave an unprecedented mark for the upcoming generations.

In the end, while concluding my story, I would like to urge people of the world to rise above the vile thinking of cast, color, creed, religion, or language and work collectively to uplift mankind. So that, we can leave our legacy for the upcoming generation and live forever on this beautiful planet Earth.

## **Second Place**

### *How I Became a Library Enthusiast*

**Seung Kim**

My eyes fell on the book receipt that I received at the checkout counter. “You just saved \$20.00 by using your library. You have saved \$355.00 since you began using the library.” The saving amount must have been the total price for the books I had checked out for the last four months. Since I moved to New Jersey from Korea in August 2017, I believe one of the best things I had ever done was to get a library card. It's not just about the money I can save by using the library. It means something much bigger and deeper than that.

I had an opportunity to read a great deal of books especially when I was young. My parents were very frugal but were big spenders in a way; they didn't buy me lots of clothes or give me much allowance. However, they bought me lots of books. Unfortunately, in Korea, where I grew up in the 1980's, public libraries were not very common. I began to realize that my parents must have spent quite a bit of money on books. Thanks to them, I read almost every day. Reading was as natural as eating and breathing for me. After years of reading, I found myself more knowledgeable about the world around me than the average person of my age. I feel lucky that I had the opportunity to read so many books when I was young.

Books can change the course of your life dramatically. Recently I heard one of the most inspiring stories related to the power of reading. It is a story of my English tutor at Bloomfield library, Mr. Bateman.

When he was a boy, he went to the library every weekend. He loved going there but he was often upset by the thought, 'Can I ever read all of these books? There are too many.' He just have been overwhelmed by the amount of books. Realizing the fact that reading all the books there was impossible, he came up with an alternative; 'How about reading all the titles of the books instead?'

While carrying out the plan, one day the book, *I, Robot* by Isaac Asimov caught his eyes. 'I, Robot? This is an interesting title.' He started to read the book because the title sounded so strange to him. The book was pretty challenging for him because of the all the unfamiliar vocabulary words including the scientific terminology. He made a list of words he didn't understand and looked up the meaning of every word on the list. It took almost six

months for him to finish the book. Finally, once he finished the book, he wasn't the same boy anymore; his text books seemed too easy and school became boring.

So, he started to read more books from the library after that. Guess what? Finally he became one of a few students who proceeded to a college education. He majored in English literature in college and graduate school. I believe this story is a proof of the power of reading.

Unfortunately, reading is not always easy. When I became a high school student, I had the dark age of reading in my life. I didn't enjoy reading anymore. Most of the time, I read books which were helpful for the school exams only. I didn't have the luxury of reading for pleasure. When I started working, I didn't read much, either. I felt like I was too tired and had no time to read.

When I came to America, I got the second chance in my life to enjoy reading. Now I can easily access all the books on a variety of topics in the library. I can decide what to read and when to read. I have all the time I can spend on reading since I don't work anymore. I go to the library pretty regularly and I have realized how much I enjoy reading; while reading good stories, I feel like the king in the *The Arabian Nights*. I can't wait for the next tale from Scheherazade, the next chapter of the book.

I am often asked how I spend my time in America by people who are also adult English learners like me. I have suggested they visit the library, since it is one of my favorite places to go, and make the best use of the open resource. I love seeing the colorful book covers on the shelves waiting to be picked up. It makes me feel like a girl in a candy shop, trying to decide what to get. Each book has a great story and there is always something I can learn. Also, I am attracted by the irony of the atmosphere in the library. It seems calm and quiet, but I know people are actually being active in their minds with reading and doing their research.

Can a book make an impact on our lives? I think so. I believe an inspiring book triggers another reading and another one after it, like the book *I, Robot* did. An inspiring book is where the magic of reading starts. I am looking forward to experiencing more miracles that books will bring to me. Definitely, the library is a good place to start the journey.

## **Third Place**

### ***Internet Addiction (Excerpt)***

**Daniel Sauers**

In a time before the internet, social media, and smart phones, the world of technology was a much different place than it is today. Someone born after 2001, also known as a member of “Generation Z,” is born into a massively connected world, and would consider the pre-internet era as an archaic struggle to do many frivolous tasks that modern technology has streamlined. Instead of researching in a book for an answer to a question, services like Google gives users the ability to receive an answer to any question simply by just asking his or her smart phone. Rather than meeting up with a friend or family member to have an in person conversation, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and Twitter are just a fragment of the numerous social network applications available making the need for face to face interaction optional. Instead of having to go outside to enjoy outdoor activities, one can comfortably sit inside and play online games with friends. The internet has so many elements that appeal to almost everyone in at least one way or another, and is influencing many facets of the daily person’s life. But is there a line where the reliance can be excessive? Can there be long term negative impacts for depending on a smart phone to coordinate every part of someone’s daily routine? Excessive internet usage can create a divorce of the user and the outside world with physical, mental, and social repercussions, but is rectifiable through limitation and awareness.

Before delving into the effects of internet addiction, it is important to see why it can be addicting in the first place. Webster’s definition for addiction is: a compulsive need for and use of a habit-forming substance (such as heroin, nicotine, or alcohol) characterized by tolerance and by well-defined physiological symptoms upon withdrawal (“Addiction”). Just like Webster’s definition, society commonly associates the term “addiction” with drugs and/or alcohol. How can a global system of interconnected computers and networks have the same affiliation with heroin or alcohol? In “Taking the Clickbait” by Sophie McBain, she explains that it turns out a lot of companies who develop applications tailor their projects to capitalize on the weaknesses of our subconscious. Like a drug, the addictive behavior of using the internet releases dopamine in the brain, causing the user to chase the feeling of the

high dopamine creates. McBain states that “Social media sites such as Instagram harness human beings’ natural desire for strong social connections and our attraction to ... ‘irresistible but unpredictable feedback’” (McBain 45). Especially when someone posts a random picture on Instagram and the unexpected flood of likes and comments show up on their post, the feeling associated pulls the person back to the application again, hoping to echo the same scenario and feelings associated. McBain explains that it is all about the hook; in gambling, winning less money on a slot machine than the amount one puts in is rewarded with bright lights and music, known as the “juice,” or the fuel that gives the user the deceitful feeling of progress. The same method is used for computer games, making the end of a level appear to be only moments away, giving the user the finish line is within arm’s reach before he or she can progress, but then the entire process repeats itself (McBain 45). People use these types of applications constantly every day for just a short moment of euphoria, but do they know what price their body is paying? Addiction of the internet can have more drug like after-effects than one would think.

Having an unhealthy attraction to the internet can have adverse effects on the human body, but how does internet addiction compare to the effects of drug and alcohol addiction? First and foremost, internet addiction is not officially recognized in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, but a 2012 study posted on the National Institutes of Health website found that “Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) ruins lives by causing neurological complications, psychological disturbances and social problems” (Hallock). It is also necessary to state that internet addiction and its negative effects on the body do not have the notorious mortal significance drug and alcohol abuse has established. There are, however, many similarities between the types of addiction that relate to one another. In 2013, researchers at Swansea and Milan Universities conducted a study on 60 individuals, with an average age of 25. They were tested to determine whether their internet usage was considered obsessive or a work-based necessity. After using the web for just 15 minutes, the volunteers previously indicated as “obsessed” showed signs of a “comedown,” an event similar to the experience individuals have after using the drug ecstasy, after stopping internet activity. Professor Phil Reed, who was involved in the study, said “our results show that around half of the young people we studied spend so much time on the net that it has negative consequences for the rest of their lives. These initial results ... suggest that there are some

nasty surprises lurking on the net for people's wellbeing" (John). Reed said these are just the "initial" results, who knows what this problem could possibly evolve into in the years to come? In order to gather opinions and thoughts from other individuals, I conducted interviews with individuals of different ages and backgrounds, asking questions based on their internet usage as well as their thoughts on individuals who are on the internet for excessive amounts. During my interview with Brett Glenn, 28, he stated, "The internet is a staple of my life." Is that a good thing? Was the human species shaped around constant interaction and reliance on a piece of manmade technology every day? It should be obvious that excessive usage of any activities and/or substances that are unfavorable to the body can have serious repercussions.

## 2018 Award Winners - Fiction

### First Place

#### *The Little Supermen*

**Clifford Henry**

The little boy was standing in the shower. He stopped the water from coming on him. He was wearing a superman costume. He had on a red mask, red pants, red boots, a white shirt with a star on it, a red cape and two wrist bands.

He said, “When I grow up I’ll be just like Superman. My friends think I’m really nuts because I want to be like Superman. I read his books. I watch his movies. I want to save people like he did. When my friends got in a fight in school, I helped them. When I was eight, I saved a dog. The dog was hit by a car and I called for help.

My father told me I am a special child. Maybe I should become a doctor and I can save people like Superman did in the movies. I have so many dreams about Superman. That’s why I want to become a Superman hero.”

The little boy asked his father if he could play sports in school.

His father’s response was, “What type of sports do you want to play?”

“Football, Dad.”

The father said, “Okay, no problem. Make sure you keep up with your grades in school.”

The little boy said, “Thank you, Dad, I will.”

The father said, “When are you going to start playing football?”

“Tomorrow at practice after school.”

The father said, “Be careful. Call me when practice is over.”

“Okay, Dad, the bus is here to pick me up. I’ll call you.”

The little boy got on the bus to go to school. He went to his class and sat down. One of his classmates asked him, “Are you going to practice after school?”

The boy said, “Yes, I’ll see you there.”

They met each other at practice. The little boy practiced with his teammates. He ran with the ball and got hurt very badly when another boy tackled him. He fell to the ground and did not get up.

The coach ran over to him. He asked him, "What hurts?"

The boy said, "My back hurts and my head is spinning. I feel dizzy."

They took him off the football field on a stretcher to an ambulance. The ambulance worker examined him. He said, "We need to get him to the hospital very quickly."

The coach said, "What's the matter with him?"

The ambulance worker said, "I won't know until we get X-rays. We will get him to the hospital right now. Did anyone call his parents?"

The coach said, "No, I'll get on it right now." He was very nervous and scared about the situation. He called the little boy's father.

The phone was ringing. The father picked up the phone. "Hello."

"This is Coach Robinson."

The father said, "How can I help you, sir?"

"Your son has been hurt. He's going to be checked into the hospital."

The father rushed to the hospital to be with his son. He arrived at the emergency room. He talked to someone at the desk.

The lady said, "Can I help you, sir?"

"My son has arrived here."

The lady said, "He just came in a little while ago. They are taking x-rays right now to see the cause of the problem. I need to get some information on your son." She handed him a form to fill out.

The father filled out the form and gave it back to the lady. He was sitting there very patient. "How long will it be before they bring him back, ma'am?"

The lady said, "They should be bringing him down now. Do you want a drink of water, sir?"

"Yes, I'd like to have a drink of water, please."

She gave him a bottle of water.

He said, "Thank you for the bottle of water. Where is the bathroom, please?"

The lady said, "Down the hall and take a left."

He came back from the bathroom. "How long would it be before they bring him down, ma'am?"

The lady said, "Sir, I told you once before they are running tests on your son. Let me call upstairs and see how long they are going to be. I will have a nurse come to talk to you."

The nurse came. "They are bringing him down right now, sir."

"Thank you very much for having patience with me."

The nurse said, "It's okay, sir. It just happens all the time when the parents come to the hospital."

The coach showed up at the hospital. He went into the waiting room where the father was. He said to the father, "What did they say?"

"They're still running tests on him upstairs. They should be bringing him downstairs soon."

The nurse's assistant brought the little boy into his room. The father started to cry. He said, "Can I go in to see him?"

The nurse said, "Give us a minute before you go in please. He won't be able to talk to you because of the type of medicine we gave him."

She came back. "Sir, you can come in to see your son. The medicine we gave him is going to make him very drowsy."

The father and coach went into the room. The father was standing over his son's bed. He was crying. He said to the nurse, "Can I talk to the doctor?"

The nurse said, "The doctor is busy right now with another patient. He'll be in to talk to you in a couple of minutes."

The father and coach started to pray. The doctor came into the room. He said to the father, "The tests came back saying your son had a concussion and a couple of bruises. He was mentioning a superman hero when he was in the examining room. Do you know about that?"

The father said, "Yes."

The doctor said, "We are probably going to keep your son a few more hours to run tests on him."

The father said, "I am going to stay here and be with my son."

The coach said, "I am sorry about what happened to your son."

The father said, "Things like this do happen. I used to be a football player."

The doctor said, "You do not have to stay if you do not want to. We will keep an eye on him and call if there are any changes." He went out.

When they were in the room, the boy woke up. The father said, "Thank God my son woke up." He went to get the doctor.

The nurse said, "The doctor is busy with a patient."

The father went back to the son's room. The coach said, "What did the doctor say?"

"The nurse said the doctor will be here in a few minutes."

The nurse came into the room. She asked the little boy, "Do you want a drink of water?"

The little boy said, "Yes, ma'am."

The nurse said to the father, "The doctor will be in to check on your son."

The doctor walked into the room. "How are you doing, little Superman?"

"I feel fine but I want to go home."

The doctor said, "I have to examine you before you can go home to make sure everything is fine."

The father said, "Thank you for everything."

The doctor examined the little boy. "You are going to be fine. You can go home."

The boy said to the doctor, "You gave me the power to get better. You are my Superman hero."

**Second Place*****Letter to a Friend***  
**Sylwia Pawliczuk**

Dear Magda,

I send you best regards from the land of my dreams.

I've been here for almost 4 years now. I remember it was like yesterday when we last saw each other. When I was leaving my native country my head was full of dreams. Although I still have my dreams, now I'm standing with both feet firmly on the ground. Life is certainly easier here as you do not have to worry about money as much because you can earn enough to spend and you can still save.

Believe me, in the beginning it was not easy for our family of four, though I still remember how hard it was. These thoughts often bring a tear to my eye and at the same time I can smile. Our first apartment I'll remember for the rest of my life, because it was partly furnished with used furniture that people had thrown away.

One day when I was returning from work, I noticed some furniture displayed in front of a house. I could not believe that someone wanted to throw away such nice furniture. I then knocked on the front door and asked the owner if I could have the furniture myself. I was even more surprised by the fact that this nice person offered me help in bringing this furniture to my apartment. So as you can see I have luck meeting nice people.

When it comes to professional work, can you imagine that I worked in three different occupations? In each of them I worked full-time. The first job was house cleaning. I never realized that I was able to clean several houses a day following a strict schedule for each house. The funniest thing that happened to me in this job is that one of the owners' dogs smelled my delicious sausage sandwiches and ate them. From then on the dog always waved his tail in a particularly friendly way.

In the next job I worked with small children and looked after them. I worked in day care for a year, but I quit this job because I realized that working in a noisy place was something I gradually disliked more and more.

Another job was in a factory where I learned how to use a microscope. It was a very interesting job, but the boss of the company seemed strange to me. He shouted at us almost every day and even called us “nuts”. I thought it was offensive and this work became unpleasant for me. One day when I was returning from work I went to a shop and bought newspapers to look at the help wanted ads. I also bought a lottery ticket... and today I'm no longer working in this factory, my dreams come true every day now traveling around the U.S.

This is because this one lottery ticket has changed my life dramatically. I won \$10,000 a month for the rest of my life!

Enclosed in this envelope I am sending you a small gift, because I know you wanted to come visit me.

This air ticket is valid for a year so I invite you to come as soon as you can!

I greet you warmly,

Sylwia

## **Third Place**

### *Untitled Christmas Story*

**Akura Morbus**

Everyone wants something on Christmas. Mainly material possessions. The people want the latest things. IPod, car, iPhone, the newest album of some horrible band. Yet, others try to give to those who are needy. Those who would steal because they have nothing. People just taunt and watch those people suffer in the cold. Some kids just want to live happily with their family since they know they won't stay forever. This is a story of a special gift given during a horrible time."

Screams of wants and selfishness blew along with the winter chill. No matter how much you give corrupted children, they want better things for it is never enough. The world is still plagued with the smog of avarice instead of freshly baked gingerbread and sweet peppermint. Snow did not fall, but scraps of metal and dirt scrape against the pavement of the once promised world. Christmas was originally a time to spend together and bring kindness. Joy To The World. There was no joy in the world, not anymore. Santa did not bother to come. Not because there weren't any cookies, but because he treasures what joliness he has left.

As the winter wind stormed down, a wanderer approached a small store. This wanderer was but a child no more than 6 years-old. The boy knew he had to save his family despite them being thieves. They do not steal out of greed or spite, but to fight through this Land of Confusion. He looked through a window and saw freshly baked rolls and smoked meats. The child only had four quarters and a 3 dimes. A dollar and thirty cents. He looks up at the window and saw his own teary eyes. He doesn't want a skateboard or a card game. What he wants is his family continue living and have a better life. The boy began to cry, knowing his family will perish. He walked away from the store and continued down the street. He looked up and saw a star. The boy prayed and prayed until his heart begins to knot up. He just wanted family. Nothing more.

Kids like him have a hard time. Having to find work to support his family. It actually saddens him that people with so many privileges would tease the less fortunate. He actually begged people to help him, but they would ignore him or tell him to get a job.

He stopped to hear music. A single guitar to play such music. The boy ran towards the sound, but to see the area was crowded. The boy moved around to at least get a glance. The boy managed to see the musician and nearly choked on a gasp. Was he some servant of Krampus? The musician held a silver guitar that look more like a blade. In front of the musician, laid a small hat with small bits of paper in it. The crowd dismissed and the boy ran up to the musician. He saw the musician bound in chains and shackles. The boy was frightened and continued to examine the player. The musician's face was concealed by a torn hood. All but a pair of red eyes and a sadistic smile can be seen through the hood.

"Hear my words that I might teach you. Take my arms and I might reach you." the musician sang.

"Excuse me...who are you?" the boy asked.

The musician stopped and lowered his instrument. "Had your parents ever told you about talking to strangers?" the musician chuckled and resumed, "I am someone who is mistaken as a threat, child. I'm neither a servant of Heaven nor a servant of Hell. I lie between the very fabric of this world. I bear the flesh of a Human, yet my eyes blaze Hellfire. I was created in the Black Depths, but I offer hope." the musician replied in a low tone.

"What were those people doing?" The child questioned.

"Listening. This world has sealed itself from the treasures of eternity because they desire the temporary treasures of this place. They refuse to liberate their minds. They prefer to keep a broken bicycle rather than something new and fulfilling."

"What happened to the world?"

"I have been here for over 20 years, watching from a small window in a cold, dark room. People becoming more like animals in the concrete jungle. Killing others, unjustified arrests, innocent people dying to feed a gluttonous power that'll never be satisfied. Children killed in front of their parents. Parents killed in front of their children. The guilty are pardoned and are allowed to roam free, taking more lives to satisfy its own hunger. Minds manipulated to believe in lies. Good people turned into monsters because a criminal was glorified on a screen. People promising good, but became corrupted slaves after tasting

something far more intoxicating than alcohol. Power. Disgraceful. I once admired Humans. Given a great gift and destroyed it. Sickening." the musician replied.

"Is the world dying?"

"It's sick and the disease worsens each day. A cure is clear, but people refuse to make a sacrifice to protect their home. That's why I'm here. To help those who want to save their home. I am not sent by your God. I just have a heart to lift the suffering souls from the rubble." the musician explained.

"What about those papers?"

"They're prayers. They seek guidance and a spark of hope. Some people lost their hope." the musician explained.

"Sir...may I ask of you some food?" the boy asked.

"You are not like these people, I can tell. I sense hope, yet you doubt it. Who taught you to doubt?"

"I...I.." the boy stuttered.

"What is your name, child?"

"Gabriel.....Gabriel Michaels." the child answered.

"A pleasure to meet you, Gabriel. I am Morbus. Despite my name meaning Disease, I wish not to spread a deathly plague. What troubles you, Gabriel?"

"I...I want my family!" Gabriel cried.

Morbus arose and walked over towards the boy. Gabriel felt like his heart broke.

"Gabriel, do not despair."

"But my mom and dad..."

"Sshh." Morbus interrupted. "Gabriel, I bring a present."

"I don't want it. I want my family healthy!" Gabriel shouted.

"Calm down. This gift is very special. I offer it to many who seek hope. I know family is important. I wish I could know that feeling." Morbus said as he wipes Gabriel's eyes with a strip of his black cloak.

"Wh-what is it?"

Morbus pulls out a small red ball from his pocket. The glass ball had a bit of yellow and green on it.

"A...Christmas ornament?"

"My brother told me that the Humans were given a gift. The gift of Life. I saw many who would trade their lives for something....useless. I offer you this gift, Gabriel. You can take it or refuse. It's your choice. Yet...you'll see something beyond the dirt on the ball. Something that will restore your hope. Again, I cannot force you to accept it."

Gabriel stared at the glass ball then back at the cloaked entity, hesitating on whether or not he should take it. What Morbus said is true, but most Demons are known to be deceitful and wicked. The Demon didn't seem hostile. Gabriel is still afraid. To him, there is a low chance that Morbus wouldn't harm him. He fears that Morbus would drag him back to the pits of Hell from where he crawled out of. Gabriel takes a breath, reaching to the ornament with a shakey hand.

"Take your time. Make sure you are positive in your decision." Morbus spoke.

Gabriel clenches his fist to end the shaking and gently takes the ball from the Demon's hands. He glances at the ornament before looking back up at Morbus. Morbus grabs his guitar.

"Have a merry Christmas, Gabriel. May your holidays be loving."

"Where are you going, Morbus?" Gabriel questioned.

"I cannot remain in one spot. There are others who seek of hope, but they search in the wrong places. I will return someday and you can tell me about your Christmas. I must be on my way. Good luck to you and your family, Gabriel."

"Thank you. Thanks for the gift."

"It's been offered to you each day. Make use of your gift."

Gabriel grasps onto Morbus' cloak, stopping him, "Wait! What if I need help again?"

"I do have disciples. Learn from them. They will teach you." Morbus responded.

"But why are you helping people? You're....a Demon."

"I was never given a choice like the Humans. I never obeyed the laws of Hell. Seeing a great kingdom rise and fall is saddening. I devote the rest of my time to help the blind." Morbus takes Gabriel's hand off his cloak and walks off into the snowy darkness.

Gabriel looks into the glass ball, spotting a spark of light. It was but a reflection. Gabriel looks up to see a bright star, lighting up the dark sky. Gabriel smiled, knowing there is hope. His family will live on.

## 2018 Award Winners - Poetry

### First Place

#### *Resistance*

Cyrc Newsome

She is a fighter, says the resistance in her walking style. A brown eyed wizard too, says the glasses on her face. But not a quitter, say the awards and trophies hanging in her room. Her confidence is a sweet smelling aroma, says the bottle of fragrance unused on the table.

I've know her since she was a baby and watched her beauty grow. From room to room I'd follow her, show measurements of her height through the ages, sit at my feet and and in my belly. If the floors could talk, she would tell tales of her troubles.

The time has come, said the clock ticking to three. It's the best time of all, say the drapes and the curtains. Our favorite person will be here in a minute. I can't wait to hear her stories, agreed the couch. Get ready, says the door, for her majesty approaches. The door swings open and her feet are planted on the mat.

**Second Place***What I Lost/What I Still Have***Marsha Burnett**

What I lost was the  
Comfort of familiar faces of  
Families, like my mom Barbara,  
My friend Tracey, my sister Bungie, my kids,  
Ashleigh and Khadeesh,  
The feeling of belonging.

What I still have is the  
Memories of home,  
The cornsilk yellow walls of the veranda,  
Where we would sit and talk  
For hours with loud laughter.

What I still have is my culture,  
My reggae music – Beres.  
Bujubantan, and Bob Marley.  
The ackee and saltfish.  
Steam fish with crackers,  
Which reminds me of where I am from.  
The land of the wood and water  
With the black, green and gold flag,  
And our motto: Out of many one people.

Jamaica

**Third Place***A New Life***Tuwanna Alves**

Leaving was like a heavy weight on my chest  
Day and night.  
A thought that would always pierce my mind.

Time kept running out  
Years turned into months  
Months turned into weeks  
Weeks turned into days.

Trying to fill free time into time left  
Dreading what I knew was about to come.  
Losing the ones that I had thought meant everything to me.  
Because we knew the distance was going to break us apart.

Already missing my mother's sweet tone,  
The way she would argue and scold.

Trying to spend as much time with friends  
Knowing well it would soon come to an end.

Knowing that bridge that I didn't want to cross  
But I had to, for me.  
Knowing that the void in my chest would be filled.

Filled with a father's love from Paul.  
Filled with the now present love of a brother.  
And now filled with the sisterly love of Brittney and Naomi.

## 2018 Award Winners - Photography

### First Place

Lingeswaran Kaliappan

*Taxi Shot*



### Second Place

Kazuhiko Watanabe

*Penguin Shot*

