

**THE
LAFAYETTE ADULT
RESOURCE ACADEMY**

The Art

of Learning,

the Art of

Caring

2010

The Art of Learning, the Art of Caring

The Lafayette Adult Resource Academy (LARA) Literary Journal, 2010

Contributors to this journal are/were LARA learners and teachers at the Washington School location, as well as LARA learner inmates at the Tippecanoe County Jail.

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at the Tippecanoe County Jail
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The Lafayette Adult Resource Academy is a state and federally funded Adult Basic Education Program conducted under the auspices of the Lafayette School Corporation.

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The Art of Learning, the Art of Caring Journal, 2010

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Table of Contents

<i>Beth Davila, The Secret to a Good Life</i>	6
<i>Cleophus Boone, To Pursue Something Great</i>	7
<i>Loretta L. Crowder, It's As If...</i>	7
<i>Hong Liu, Mountain Trip</i>	8
<i>Michael L. Smith, One Important Goal</i>	9
<i>Alicia Montoya, My Dream Job</i>	10
<i>Peggy Turner, My Dream Job</i>	10
<i>Ismael Murrieta, My Dream Job</i>	10
<i>Roddy Richardson, Influential People</i>	11
<i>Jose R. Puentes, Un Detalla Para el di de San Valentin</i>	13
<i>Desiree Wilhite, Hope</i>	13
<i>Tyler Street, Stereotyping</i>	14
<i>Zhora Cecil, This Is my Story</i>	14
<i>Marc Braden, The Biloxi Famine</i>	15
<i>Maria Reyna, My Dream Job</i>	16
<i>Sharon D. Mallory, My Dream Job</i>	16
<i>Victoria Miranda, My Dream Job</i>	16
<i>Tyler Street, Self-Concept</i>	17
<i>Krystle Smith, My Best Friend</i>	17
<i>Beatrice Del Real, Personal Reflection</i>	18
<i>Crystal Moore, My Dream Job</i>	19
<i>Martha Elena Trinidad, My Dream Job</i>	19
<i>Anthony Wayne Crume, Come in Outside</i>	20
<i>Rafael Tirado, Introduced into a New Culture</i>	21
<i>Betty Braun, My Dream Job</i>	23
<i>Anthony Wayne Crume, BFF?!</i>	24
<i>Karen Smith, My Dream Job: A Computer Processor</i>	25
<i>Olivia Casas, My Dream Job</i>	25
<i>Norma Calderon, My Dream Job</i>	25
<i>Lori A. Bacon, Standing Up to Pushy Salespeople</i>	26
<i>Lino Cardenas, My Dream Job</i>	26
<i>Cleophus Boone, Trapped in His Own Heart</i>	27
<i>Zachary Hudson, Wizard and His Globe</i>	27
<i>Ismael Garduno, My Dream Job</i>	28
<i>Consuelo Cortes, My Dream Job</i>	28
<i>Marta Rosas, My Dream Job</i>	28
<i>William Campbell, The Trip to Australia</i>	29

The Art of Learning, the Art of Caring – The Lafayette Adult Resource Academy

<i>Anthony Wayne Crume, Hallways</i>	30
<i>Karen Griffis, My Life Story</i>	31
<i>Shirley Liao, My Dream Job: International Tour Guide</i>	32
<i>Taiba Bwardag, My Dream Job</i>	32
<i>Cherry Richardson, The Old Man</i>	33
<i>Elisa Guzman, My Dream Job</i>	34
<i>Alma Gutierrez, My Dream Job</i>	34
<i>Leopoldine Kpegba, My Dream Job</i>	35
<i>Lyn Keary, My Dream Job</i>	36
<i>Carolyn Perkins, My Dream Job</i>	36
<i>Carole Dutton, My Dream Job</i>	36
<i>Anthony Wayne Crume, Stereotyping</i>	37
<i>Ildar Akhmadullia, Resurgence</i>	37
<i>Michael Smith, Basketball</i>	39
<i>Greg Watkins, My Dream Job</i>	40
<i>Krystle Smith, A Love that Never Happened</i>	40
<i>Scott Alva, My Dream Job</i>	41
<i>Graciela Garibay, My Dream Job</i>	41
<i>James Smith, My Dream Job</i>	42
<i>Anthony Wayne Crume, Self-Concept</i>	42
<i>Tony Hill, How to Appreciate Music</i>	43
<i>Dick Mullen, Words for My Son</i>	44
<i>Carrie N. Rust, To Begin Anew</i>	45
<i>Marcus W. Koechig, My Dream Job</i>	46
<i>Tim Powell, My Dream Job</i>	46
<i>Carolyn Thompson, My Ideal Job</i>	47
<i>Hector S. Campos, My Dream Job</i>	48
<i>Rebecca Graves, My Dream Job</i>	48
<i>Minzhi Wang, A Day to Learn to Cherish Friendship</i>	49
<i>Kenny Burgess, My Dream Job</i>	50
<i>Shrango Baha, My Dream Job</i>	50
<i>Connie Jacobs, My Dream Job</i>	51
<i>Xu Qian, Made Decisions by Myself</i>	51
<i>Terry Kaufman, My Dream Job</i>	52
<i>Amanda Marie Steckel, My First Impression</i>	54
<i>Tim Glanders, My Dream Job</i>	55
<i>Cindy Chapman, My Dream Job</i>	55
<i>Earl Cox, My Dream Job</i>	56
<i>Denise Valentine, Some Truth About Me</i>	57

The Secret to a Good Life

By Beth Davila

I would like to express what is in my heart, to share with you the secret of a good life. The secret has brought me happiness and peace, and I want to share it as a way of helping others. What is the secret, you ask? It's actually no mystery at all but lies deep within us. Without our knowledge at times, we struggle in its throes. Men and women have fought to accept it or reject it since the dawn of civilization. This secret reaches far out into the universe and orders all things according to its standards.

So, what is the secret? It is this. The key to a successful life is goodness in all its forms. That's it. It's the marriage of decency and righteousness and all that is a result of that. And what happens then? All kinds of marvelous things happen that spark a thrill for living. It encompasses charity, honesty, forgiveness, and all other virtues that ennoble mankind.

Charity and kindness flow out like rivers of helping hands, reaching out to others, palms open in acceptance and giving, fingers strong for carrying or supporting, palms clapping approval or recognition, or hands patting shoulders in camaraderie or encouragement.

Honesty and integrity stand like pillars of strength that support individuals and entire nations of people. Foundations are built on truthfulness and openness. Human interactions are developed out of respect, and collaborations are layered with trust and loyalty. Honor is the code that stamps its identity on all things held in esteem by mankind.

Humility, despite modest origins, testifies to quiet fortitude and strength. Though it is unpretentious and unassuming, we automatically know that when we meet it face to face, we are standing with a giant.

Forgiveness. It's the ultimate virtue, the largest capacity for human love. We must forgive and forget. Which one of us has not needed to be forgiven? Forgiveness frees the soul, cleanses the mind, and releases the human spirit to love again.

Goodness takes on many forms, and each one provides a quality that leads to a satisfying life. Transcending knowledge, status, and wealth, goodness is at the heart of human existence. It's at the core of our very being. It gives beauty and meaning to life. It promotes longevity and wisdom beyond our years. It's the pathway to happiness and peace.

To Pursue Something Great

By Cleophus Boone

To pursue something
great for others
to follow their dreams.

For what it is to
Come by following their
heart, for what is real
by having hopes and dreams.

To pursue something
great by planning for
the future, to succeed
in life by sacrificing for
others to dream.

To search for trust
in others by starting
a new life for what is
to come.

To pursue something
great to honor,
faith to never back
down to bring happiness
to others for their fate.

By living in a dream
to set the standard
for others to have
hope for a new beginning.

It's As If...

By Loretta L. Crowder

Whatever happened to
Showing compassion?
It's as if kindness has
Gone totally out of fashion.

Why can't people be more
Willing to try understanding?
It's as if the world is
Being selfishly...demanding.

Does anything really get
Solved with anger and violence?
It's as if some can't handle
Calmness and silence.

How is it so many end up
Bitter and rude?
It's as if we have all forgotten
How to have a better attitude.

Mountain Trip

Translated from the original Chinese poem by Hong Liu

Up the distant cold mountain a stone
path extends slant.

At the place where white clouds rise
there is a house.

I stop my carriage and sit to enjoy
the late maple forest.

The frost-bit leaves are more crimson
than spring blooms.

The image shows a vertical calligraphy of the poem 'Mountain Trip' by Du Fu. The characters are written in black ink on a white background. The text is arranged in four vertical columns, reading from right to left. The first column contains the title '山行' (Mountain Trip). The second column contains the first line '远上寒山石径斜'. The third column contains the second line '白云生处有人家'. The fourth column contains the third line '停车坐爱枫林晚'. The fifth column contains the fourth line '霜叶红于二月花'. To the left of the main text, there is a smaller vertical inscription: '杜牧诗 洪莉书于秋' (Du Fu's poem, written by Hong Liu in autumn).

One Important Goal

By Michael L. Smith

One important goal I would like to achieve in the next few years is to earn a college degree in business. I know that in order to reach my goal I will have to earn a GED. Next, I will need to enter a small college, such as Ivy Tech, to build up my skills. Finally, I plan to apply to Purdue or another four-year school to complete my degree.

My first step toward my goal will be to earn my GED. To get my GED, I will have to take a pretest to see where I stand on the level range. If I'm not ready, I think I have to attend class to study and get a couple of books on the subjects where I need to focus. When I think I'm ready, I will take another test. When I'm done with the test, I'll see how much I improved. Then if I improve enough to take the GED test, I will sign up for the test.

My second step toward my goal is to enter a small college, such as Ivy Tech. To get into the small college, they will have to see my GED to see if I qualify to be accepted. If I'm accepted, I'll take a COMPASS test to see where I would need to be placed. The COMPASS test is a test to see how smart you are and where you will be placed on the level of your knowledge.

The third step toward my goal is to get into a four-year college like Purdue or any other college. The first thing I would have to do is put in the paperwork to transfer my credits. Then I would fill out an application form and pay the fee for my application. The fee is fifty dollars. Even if I have paid and put in an application, they don't have to accept me. If I don't get accepted, I would have to keep studying at Ivy Tech and try again the following year.

I have talked about three things I would like to achieve in the next few years. They are: getting my GED, studying at a small college like Ivy Tech, and to start going to a four-year degree college like Purdue. I also talked about the things I would have to do to achieve my goal. I'm currently working on my first step toward getting my GED. I'm hoping to earn it soon.

My Dream Job

By Alicia Montoya

My dream job is to be a nurse. I like to take care of newborn babies and the people who are sick and need help with their duties. I will wear nursing scrubs and tennis shoes, and I prefer to work on the 2nd or 3rd shift. I like to make people feel better. That's why I think this is a good job for me.

My Dream Job

By Peggy Turner

I would like to work in the main office doing deskwork. I think I would be good at it. You get to dress up very nice. You get to talk to other people and your co-workers. At this job you would be working on MS Word and MS Excel sheets. Also, you would be dealing with a lot of students. That is the fun part of this dream job. Don't you think this is cool? I do, so get your dream job.

My Dream Job

By Ismael Murrieta

My name is Ismael Murrieta and my dream job is car restoration. I want to restore old cars because I like to work on cars, and I like to fix things. I will be working in my garage. I will look for older cars that need parts and paint. Then I will change the parts that need to be changed. Then after everything is fixed, I will sell the car and make a profit. I prefer to work by myself. I will dress in blue jeans, t-shirts, and work boots. I prefer to work on the day shift. By doing this job, I will be my own boss.

Influential People

By Roddy Richardson

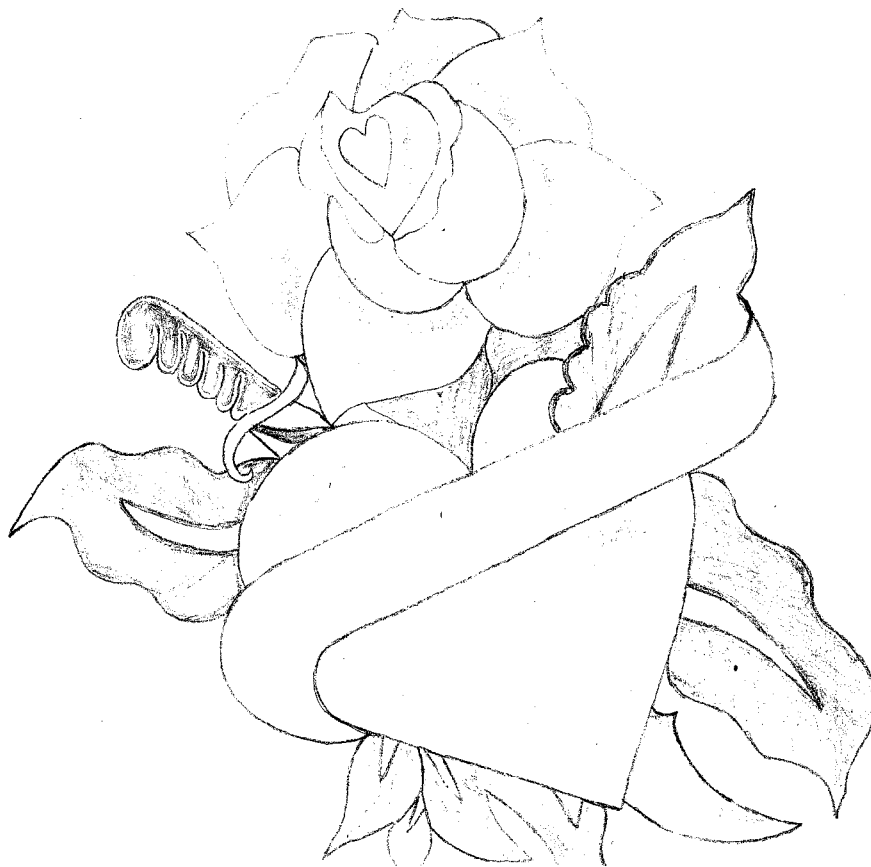
One of the most influential people in my life is my mom. My mom was raised not knowing who her real parents were. She was born and raised in Gary, Indiana. The way my mom describes her adoptive mother is that it was a hard past to live through. She was punished weekly for the smallest mistakes. In this day and age, if she were hit the way she was, her mother would have gone to jail for child abuse. I highly respect my mom because she isn't the most successful person in the world when it comes to income, but she is a very successful person as a person and a mom. Another reason I respect her so much is because most parents treat their kids the way they were treated. My mom isn't like that. She is the complete opposite of her mother; she has never once beaten any of her children, and none of us have criminal records or behave poorly in school. This just goes to show that she is a successful parent and she didn't have to hit her children.

One thing my mom taught me as a person was to treat people the way you want to be treated. I never cared about other people's feeling or thoughts until she drilled it in my head that the way I was acting was selfish, wrong, and it was offensive. I used to call my sisters and my brother names that were highly insulting; I even made my sisters cry. I never felt bad until my mom told me that I was killing their self-esteem and hurting their feelings. As I look back with a kind heart and an ample amount of feelings for other people, it hurts me inside to know how I used to treat people. If my mom wasn't there to explain to me that what I used to say hurt people and was wrong, I would still be heartless and a jerk.

When I was a third grader, my mom and dad separated. I don't know how long it took me to stop crying. I couldn't believe it; I was so young, and I just didn't understand. Fortunately, both my parents stayed in town and lived not too far away from each other. Therefore, it was easy to see both of my parents whenever I needed to talk to one of them. I started to spend most of the time with my mom when I was an eighth grader. We had our disagreements, but I learned to appreciate her and respect her once I realized that she was only trying to be the best parent she could be.

My mom has inspired me to become a better student than what I ever thought I would be. When I was an eighth grader, I didn't even think I was going to graduate from high school. When she talked to me, she gave me the advice and confidence I needed to keep pushing for success. I used to be satisfied with any grade I got as long as I was passing; my mom convinced me that I could do so much better than what I was showing. She opened my opportunities by helping me to excel in academics and athletics. She gave me confidence when she told me to have a dream and not to let anyone tell me it couldn't come true.

I truly believe that my mom is one of the most unselfish persons in the world. She doesn't have a lot of money, but whenever she has a dime to spare, she is always willing to give it up before she spends it on herself. One reason I saw this is because when our phone plan was up, she didn't have a phone, and when we were ready to get a new phone, she used what little money she had in order to get me and my brother the new phones we wanted, and she was left with nothing but the bill. Even though I think I have it rough sometimes, I only have to remember what my mom has survived to know that I don't appreciate her enough for what she has done for me.



“Un Detalla Para el di de San Valentin”
By Jose R. Puentes

Hope

By Desiree Wilhite

You are the sun that shines on this hidden rose of mine. It's a light her petals haven't seen in quite a while. She was starting to die and wither away until she saw your sun that day. Now there is a chance that she may live with the hope that your sun gives. Because you are the sun that shines on this hidden rose of mine.

Stereotyping

By Tyler Street

Faulty reasoning is used much too often in today's society. Most of it goes unnoticed or is even complimented. One form of faulty reasoning is stereotyping.

Stereotyping is a biased belief about a whole group of people based on insufficient or irrelevant evidence. A stereotype ignores the individual. Good listeners reject stereotypes and demand specific information. Bad listeners ignore the information and judge a certain group of people by the stereotype that society has put on them.

I have learned that doing research before judging someone is the politically correct thing to do. Not everyone is what their stereotype portrays.

This Is my Story

By Zhora Cecil

My name is Zhora Cecil. I enjoy cooking and baking. I cannot eat sweets, so I give them away. I like to see my friends and family eat all my cakes.

I have a daughter. Her name is Leila. She is the best bread maker. She is a teacher. My son-in-law's name is Joe. He likes to cook Italian food.

I have a grandson, and he is in the Army. He is the best cook. When he was 13 years old, he cooked dinner for his family. His name is Sammy.

I have a granddaughter. Her name is Amber. She is in college and likes to bake birthday cakes and fruit pies.

No one in my family likes to go out to eat dinner in a restaurant. They like to eat home-cooked meals instead.

Today I can read and write because of LARA and all the teachers who help me with my English.

Thank you.

The Biloxi Famine

By Marc Braden

A long time ago, a Biloxi Indian chief and his tribe faced a famine. The chief was known for his great fishing skills. He headed down to the river to gather food for the tribe. The chief returned with no fish. This shocked the tribe and the chief as well. Therefore, the next day, he went to the river and still caught no fish. He returned to the tribe disappointed in himself for letting everyone down.

Late that night, he returned to his home in hopes of finding out what was going on, but he ended up confused as to why he had not caught anything. Therefore, the chief asked his daughter to go pray to the River Spirit with him.

At daybreak, the chief and his daughter went to the river to pray. They prayed until nightfall with no answer from the River Spirit. The chief eventually returned to the camp with much persuasion from his daughter. Confused, the chief asked the Sky Spirit for an answer. The Sky Spirit said a raven would bring him what he needed to catch the fish. With this statement, a black feather fell into his lap.

In the morning, the chief and his daughter found that a gilded net lay before them. With the net in hand, the chief headed towards the river. He cast the net and sat in wait for the fish he prayed for. The chief, eventually tired of waiting, started to draw in his net, and to his surprise he could not. The chief called upon his tribe to help draw the net in. After much effort and patience, the net lay before them, swollen with millions of fish. It took day and night to clean all the fish and put them on drying racks.

When they all lay asleep, a greedy bobcat came into camp and ate all the fish. The bobcat headed towards the river for a drink. When the bobcat arrived, the River Spirit confronted him. He scolded the bobcat for what he had done and cursed him to the bottom of the river. This is how the catfish came into being, and for years to come, the catfish would be the main source of food for the Biloxi tribe.

My Dream Job

By Maria Reyna

My name is Maria Reyna. My dream job is to be a real estate agent. I want to be able to help people find a good house they like. I really enjoy being around people. I also like to see new houses. I like to meet people and get to know them. I would like to have an office with coworkers to discuss stuff about work. I would like to make people happy by getting their dream home for them. I could find them the best house at the best price in a neighborhood that fits their family.

My Dream Job

By Sharon D. Mallory

My name is Sharon D. Mallory, and my dream job is to become a registered nurse. This includes taking care of the elderly, taking their vitals, administering medication, bathing patients, and feeding patients—overall, making sure that they are comfortable in a new environment. The way I will be dressed is in scrubs. This is a short term for nursing uniforms. My shifts will vary, because registered nurses are always on call. I'm very excited about this; it's been a dream of mine since childhood. I have already been in this field as a CAN, and I will be returning to school in April to further my career. Wish me well.

My Dream Job

By Victoria Miranda

My dream job would be nursing. I like it because I already studied in Mexico for one and a half years. Now I want to be a nurse in the United States. I like talking with the people, and I love to give shots. I would wear scrubs, and I would like to work during the days. In order to be a nurse, I need to improve my English and my computer skills.

Self-Concept

By Tyler Street

Self-concept: the textbook definition of this word is, “a collection of perceptions about every aspect of your being.” In easier words, self-concept is the way you see yourself and how others see you.

Your self-concept is developed by observation and experience, and also by what others tell you. If someone tells you that you look great, your self-concept is going to be very positive. But if someone calls you ugly, then your self-concept will be negative.

Self-concept can affect your intrapersonal communication as well. Going back to positive self-concept, if people say you look great, then you’ll tell yourself you are. But if they say you are ugly then you’ll be very hard on yourself.

In conclusion, I’d like to challenge you to think for yourself. You don’t have to believe everything you hear. If you’re happy the way you are, then it shouldn’t matter what other people think.

My Best Friend

By Krystle Smith

I know you’re in a better place, but why did you leave me? I loved you probably more than you knew. I can still hear and see your reactions to the things I do or have done. I don’t know if you knew it, but you were everything to me. You were not just a father, but you were a brother, a son, a best friend, a therapist, and a mom when you had to be. You were caring and gentle, but to be honest, your temper scared me. You know, when I was growing up and we would fight, and I said nasty things to you, I would cry because they also hurt me. Why can’t you be here? I need you a lot, but I also understand God wanted you around to make Him happy. Don’t worry about me; I will move on, but you’ll always be in my heart. Love you, Daddy. Always and forever.

Personal Reflection

By Beatrice Del Real

My parents are my inspiration in my life. They worked so hard. They got up too early in the morning every day. My father worked at a small ranch. He planted corn, beans, peanuts, tomatoes, peppers, onions and potatoes. He came back home too late every night. He went to the city only on weekends. He bought some things they needed.

My mom worked at home. She was a housewife. She had to wash and sew the clothes by hand, make food, clean the house, and feed the babies, and she almost never went out with her friends. She sometimes visited her parents.

My parents had many children: That's why they needed to work too hard. Their first children were boys. My mom taught them how to help at home. They sometimes worked at home and sometimes outside. Many years later, I was born, and their surprise was that I was a girl.

When I grew up, I realized that my parents needed to work hard. When I could come to the USA, I wanted to have a different life than my parents' life. I'm studying English at LARA because I want to have a better job and make money. I need to help my parents because they can't work. They need some medicines and vitamins. I know they worked a lot.

They are my inspiration in my life. They were very good parents. I've been thankful for them. I'll love them all my life.

My Dream Job By Crystal Moore

My dream job is to be in financing. I wish to help others with their budgets so they will be able to know what they are spending their money on monthly and correct it if need be! A classroom setting to teach larger groups would be a goal, as well as teaching one on one. I believe that if people knew what they were spending, they could see if they were overspending. For people on a tight income, I would be able to help them to pay their bills (maybe not on the due date, but they wouldn't be overdrawn or in debt) by offering to teach a budgeting class at a community adult learning center.

My dream job would require returning to school for business and mathematics courses. However, the thought of going back to school is scary, but I know that it will be a good thing for me and my family. Being in finance would also help me with my family budget. I would be able to get a job I really want.

My Dream Job By Martha Elena Trinidad

My name is Martha Elena Trinidad, and my dream job is to have my own restaurant. It will be open seven days a week from 10:00 am to 11:00 pm. I will make Mexican food. I will wear casual clothes, a hat and an apron to work. My restaurant will be small and will be able to seat around 80 people.

I would like this job because I would be my own boss and cook. I love to cook. I don't have any pictures, but I have ideas on how I would like my place to look. I want to decorate with many things from Mexico like serapes, metates, and molcajetes that are traditional to Mexico. I would have some people to help serve, bus tables, and help around the restaurant.

To get my dream job I need to find a building or space that has a kitchen and dining area. I need money, so I would go to the bank to apply for a loan to see if I could have my restaurant.

Come in Outside

By Anthony Wayne Crume

Call her up
then hang up the phone
I want her here
but I'll sleep alone

I know my methods don't make sense
but she's killin' me with her innocence

And even though I love you dear
part of me wishes you weren't here
but even though I want you gone
I've wanted you all along

You can come to sleep
but on the floor
Come right in, then hit yourself heading out the door
You feel so right but I want to do wrong
but you've given me no reason, to kick you
out and make you gone

You're so nice
What should I do?
'cause you're too sweet
for me to dump you
and give me everything I want
I like you here, but I wish you were gone.

Introduced into a New Culture

By Rafael Tirado

“It was five in the morning. A seminarian and a laborer with thousands of pieces of paperwork which were not enough to demonstrate that they were sincere . . . They were looking for a visa for a dream . . .”

-- from “Visa para un Sueño” (“Visa for a Dream”) by Juan Luis Guerra

This song by Juan Luis Guerra, a Dominican singer, vividly illustrates my situation. On a hot day during the last week of August, 1996, my wife and I arrived at the American Embassy around five in the morning to get a visa to reach a dream. The dream was to come to the United States to study theology. We were in line waiting for an interview until around ten in the morning. When we approached the gates where the consuls were interviewing people, I noticed that a female consul denied the visa for all the people as far as my eyes could see. However, a male consul granted visas for almost everybody that I could see. Our line had the destination of one of those consuls.

When I was sure that the female consul would interview us, I told my wife, “This is the end of our dream.”

When the consul said, “Next,” my portfolio fell from my hands. I walked rapidly to the gate where the female consul was waiting for us.

She asked me, “Are you Rafael Tirado?”

I answered, “Yes, I am.”

She asked me again, “When do you want to leave for the United States?”

I scratched my head, shrugged my shoulders, and said, “As soon as possible.”

She replied, “Your visas will be ready tomorrow.”

It was amazing!

My wife, our two children Esther and Jose, and I left the Dominican Republic very early Friday, September 6, 1996. We arrived at San Antonio, Texas, around seven in the evening. Many of the airport employees spoke Spanish, but I could barely understand them because they used many Mexican expressions. A young Mexican man came for us at the airport. He took us to a church where a professor from Colegio Biblico was preaching for a revival.

My first culture shock was when the minister stood up and said, “Who wants to invite Mr. Tirado and his family for dinner?” Nobody answered. The minister asked the same question once more, and after some seconds a man with a quiet voice said, “I’ll invite them.” Maybe for them that was normal, but for us that was an embarrassing situation. I felt uncomfortable. In my culture, it was unusual to ask someone in public to invite a stranger to dinner because people make arrangements privately.

Many people don’t realize how hard it is to adjust to a new culture. When I arrived for the first time in the United States, I felt like a fish without water. I lived with my family on the campus of the college where I was a student. Although that college was only for Spanish speakers, I couldn’t adjust easily. People think that Spanish speakers have the same culture everywhere, but it is not the truth.

One afternoon, after my last class, a student asked me, “Rafael ya mero?” Later, a teacher asked me the same question. However, I didn’t understand: that is a Mexican expression, which in English means, “Are you done yet?”

Another day, while I was talking to the academic dean, he told me, “Many teachers and students in this college are drugged.”

I asked him, “Really?” As he insisted that it was the truth, I felt sad. Later I learned that it was another Mexican expression that means being in debt, like being in the red. In my home country, I received two awards from the government for being a clever student, but in this new culture, I felt like a foolish person.

During my next few weeks after we arrived at Colegio Biblico, my cultural behaviors, such as shaking hands with everybody that I met, surprised many people. One day in a cultural class, the teacher referred to me saying, “When you see Rafael, get ready for him to shake your hand. He will shake your hand no matter how many books you have in your hands.”

Soon I started missing my culture. I missed the church services, the food, the people walking everywhere and greeting everyone, the two hours for lunch break, the baseball games everywhere – even in the streets –, the weather, and many other things. There were many contrasts in the new culture and my home country. However, for me it was a surprise that I have more things in common with American culture than with some Hispanic countries’ cultures. This is due to the fact that some American influences have affected the Dominican Republic: 1) In 1965 the country was invaded by the United States. 2) Major League Baseball has made a tremendous impact on the lives of the Dominican people. 3) The country has had an increase in the traffic of people to and from New York.

As a result of the cultural differences, I felt like Joseph in the prison in Egypt. At that point, I spent most of my time attending classes, being in the library, doing my assignments and working. However, the adjusting process came soon. Once, one of the administrators touched my shoulder and asked me, “Could you work in the bookstore for one week, please?”

I replied, “Yes, I can do that.” After that week, I worked in the bookstore for the rest of my years at the college. That new job gave me contact with many people and put me in a wide cultural context. This job helped me in my process of assimilation. Since my senior year at the college, I have been helping other people to adjust to new cultures.

One year after we came to live in Indiana, my wife and I went to visit our families in the Dominican Republic. We were surprised that we looked like strangers in our home country. Our accent had changed. Many of the events which before were normal now were strange to me.

Adjusting to a new culture is important because it helps strangers avoid frustrations and distress, but it is a hard process. I think about how hard it will be for my children when we return to my country. I also think of the children of immigrants who are deported. Those children have to adjust to a new culture they don’t know, which is a common situation today.

My Dream Job

By Betty Braun

My dream job takes place in an upscale nightclub as a singer in Clearwater, Florida near one of their beautiful white sandy beaches. The tourist trade and locals frequent this area for a relaxing evening of good drinks, food and music. I would be singing by myself with the accompaniment of a good band for the enjoyment of the guests. My clothing would be upscale and would fit the mood of the evening. In clubs, the hours are usually 9:00 pm to 2:00 a.m. Of course, there would be hours of rehearsal. I would like this job because I have liked singing all my life, and this wouldn’t feel like work; it would be enjoyable also.

When I first started looking for a job, I mentioned it to friends and acquaintances; they mentioned it to their friends and family. Through word of mouth, I found this very nice position. It pays well, it’s kept clean, and it has a nice class of clientele. The manager is very good to his employees.

BFF?!

By Anthony Wayne Crume

I saw you walking on that dark day
you walked right by and I
couldn't find one thing to say

Let me sleep and dream of you
at least this way you'll want me too
and let's not make the alarm too loud
'cause the only thing I can think is how
If I'm not sleeping then I'm not this proud without you

You say we'll be friends to the very end
but that's something that my heart can't contend
And since I like to see you, I guess I'll just pretend
but unlike those other guys, I lay with you 'til then

Let me sleep and dream of you
at least this way you'll want me too

and let's not make the alarm too loud
'cause the only thing I can think is how
If I'm not sleeping then I'm not with you

Every time I get the nerve
to tell you how much you deserve
I find you with another guy on your arm
Another love that's a false alarm

And I know that we're just friends
but that's not how it has to end
if you'd just give me another shot

And I know I dragged my feet
to date the girl that I always want to see
If you only knew how much you mean to
me
I'd turn back time just to have you here with me

My Dream Job: A Computer Processor

By Karen Smith

I think my dream job would be a good one because it would be with people. And I like being with people at all times. I've always wanted to work on computers at a job because I think it would pay more money at that kind of job. I would work on the computer all day for my job. I would dress casually for a job like that, but I would have to be neatly dressed for work. My hours would be from nine to five, and that would be good hours to work. I've always wanted those kinds of hours with no weekends. A job like this would be good for me.

My Dream Job

By Olivia Casas

My name is Olivia Casas, and my dream job is to be a flight attendant. I want to be a flight attendant because I like to travel, meet different people, and see new places. I would serve the passengers their meals and drinks. I would also make announcements and show people safety tips. I would be working in the airplane, and I would work with the pilot and other flight attendants. I would most likely have to wear a skirt, a blouse with a jacket, and dress shoes. I prefer to work during the day shift instead of at night.

My Dream Job

By Norma Calderon

My dream job is to be a businesswoman. I want to be a businesswoman because I like to have contact with other people. I will work in my office and work on the computers and talk on the phone. I will work with other people like my boss, my co-workers, and customers. I will wear a business suit so that I look professional. I will work during the day. For my job, I will speak English and use computers every day, so I need to work on these skills in order to become a businesswoman.

Standing Up to Pushy Salespeople

By Lori A. Bacon

My important conversation revolved around making a \$50 purchase for a free gift. It was an important consideration for me, because it involved spending \$50 and putting it on my credit card. The first salesperson talked to me and said she did not know much about the free gift with purchase. She sent another salesperson out to talk to me about it. According to her, all I had to do was make a \$50 purchase and put it on my credit card. Once I made the purchase, she would put my name on a list because they were only ordering enough free gifts for those who had made the required purchase. I told her I liked the Estée Lauder cologne “Beautiful.” She said if I bought a bottle of cologne, it would count as a purchase for my free gift.

I told her I would think about it, and I really wanted some time to mull it over. It’s not often I indulge in a \$50 bottle of cologne. But she would not give up. She kept telling me I had better hurry up and get on the list or there would be no free gift. I said I just needed some time to think, and then she went on about what a terrific deal it was and how the wise person would make the \$50 purchase that day.

Somehow, some way, I finally got away from her. I continued shopping, but when I had to go through the department, I avoided that counter. A purchase I might have made I did not make because the salesperson was so pushy. High-pressure salespeople really turn me off. In the end, I realized I could stand up to a pushy salesperson like her and not give in, thus making the right decision.

My Dream Job

By Lino Cardenas

My name is Lino Cardenas, and my dream job is to be a computer programmer. I want to work inside working on the computer in computer graphics technology, gaming, movies, and taping.

I could work at any office; I like to learn technology and that’s why I think that it is a good idea to be a programmer. I have better concentration when I’m alone, so I like to work by myself. I also like my own space and to set my own hours so that I could be working during daylight hours. If I became a programmer of computers, I could help other people to learn about computers and do a better job to execute new jobs in the future. I can show my family the way that I believe is to have a good job with good pay. I will try to get my dream job to come true in the future!

Trapped in His Own Heart

By Cleophus Boone

Trapped in his broken
heart that turns
to darkness.

His dream was broken
his life was over. His broken
promise.

That he had no more
Time to live for tomorrow
that his life turns to ashes.

Trapped in his broken heart
that his wings were completely
broken that he didn't feel
like he didn't become
his own man.

That no one could
understand how he feels
deep inside
that his pain was
burning inside him in his
heart.

Trapped in his broken
Heart that is trying to
Start a new chapter
for others to build.

Trying to succeed in
life his dream starting
to fade.

His heart closes that
he feels like he died
by his own hands.
That he feels like
he was trapped within himself.

Beneath his wounds
that he is bearing his own cross that it is
his broken heart.



“Wizard and His Globe”
By Zachary Hudson

My Dream Job

By Ismael Garduno

My name is Ismael Garduno, and my dream job is to have my own ranch. I would be working on the ranch everyday taking care of animals, growing crops, and taking care of the equipment. I want to have many animals like cows, horses, sheep, chickens, turkeys, pigs, and others. My ranch would be small.

I would like to have my own ranch, so I could work alone. I like working outside and could do this everyday. I like animals and would be able to have as many as I want. I would be able to wear vaquero outfits, boots, jeans shirt, vests, hats, and coveralls.

To get my dream job, I have been taking English classes, so I can speak better English. I am also taking computer classes and practice when I can. I have my little ranch back home in Mexico. I am here in the United States so my daughters can go to school and to a university.

My Dream Job

By Consuelo Cortes

My name is Consuelo Cortes, and my dream job is an in-home service worker. I would like this job because I've done it before and liked it. I can work during the days and be with my kids when they return from school. Having this job will help me pay for their education. I will work in the houses of sick people. My responsibilities would include: helping them bathe, cooking, cleaning the house, and giving them medicine. Other than sick people, I will work with one other coworker. I would wear casual clothes, like jeans and a sweatshirt. I am excited for my dream job to come true.

My Dream Job

By Marta Rosas

My name is Marta Rosas. My dream job is to be a computer teacher. I like to work with older people. It's necessary to know how to use a computer. There are many things to learn about the computer. People can pay their bills, make travel plans, balance their checkbooks, write letters, and other things by using a computer. I would also like to work with teenagers who have drug or gang problems. If I were a computer teacher, I could teach the teenagers how the computer works and use many different programs. Getting the students interested in computers would help keep them off the streets and safe.

The Trip to Australia

By William Campbell

If I could go to any country in the world, where would I go, and why? I would choose to go to Sydney, Australia.

The reason I choose Sydney, Australia, is because when I was younger, my father and mother went there for their anniversary. Australia is the world's smallest continent, southeast of Asia between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. It is a commonwealth, comprising the continent of Australia, the island of Tasmania, two external territories, and several dependencies. It was the first British settlement, a penal colony at Fort Jackson, which is now part of Sydney. It was established in 1788. The present-day states grew as separate colonies; six of them formed a federation in 1901. In 1911, the Northern Territory joined the commonwealth, and the Capital Territory, on the site of Canberra, was then created. Canberra is the capital and Sydney is the largest city. The population in 2000 was 17,843,000, and it is still growing.

I choose Sydney because that is the same place my parents went when I was younger. I still have the pictures from when they went on their trip. The only reason I know a little about the country is because I did some research on the country when I was in the 10th grade.

I would like to take my wife and kids to Sydney for a vacation. I've never been out of the United States, so I feel that would be a life-changing experience for me and my family. Also, it will give me something to remember later on down the road, as well as giving my kids something to talk about with their kids.

Just seeing pictures and doing a little research about the city and country, I know that from the main bridge in Sydney, when it turns dark outside, you can see the city's beautiful lights. Also, Australia is the home of kangaroos, and my daughter loves kangaroos, so it would be pretty cool for us to make a trip to the Outback, where they can be seen in the wild.

I have explained where I would go if I could pick any place in any country to go. I have also given you a little detail on the specific place just in case you didn't know about the place I chose. I hope someday my dreams will come true, and I can visit Australia with my family.

Hallways

By Anthony Wayne Crume

I looked in the hallway the other day
just to see if I could find your smiling face
'cause you make me smile when I see your face
even when we're mad at each other

Can't stay mad at me forever girl
'cause you know I make you smile
and just to see your face again
you know I'd walk for miles

Don't turn your back on me
it's not like that you've won
just when you think I've given up on you
is when I've just begun

I know you hate it when I stare
like to pretend that you're not there
you think I'm looking for your imperfections
and you're right
'cause I'll keep looking 'til I see some there

You can't stay mad at me forever girl
'cause you know I make you smile
and just to see your face again
you know I'd walk for miles

Living here without you
is like not living at all
'cause even though I'd still be walking
my heart wouldn't beat at all

My Life Story

By Karen Griffis

My name is Karen Griffis. I was born on June 21, 1959, at St. Elizabeth Hospital. I have two brothers, but one passed away. I have one older sister. My mother had a baby boy. He was born one year and one month after I was, but he was stillborn. My parents divorced when I was six years old. My mother moved to California with my older brother and sister. My dad raised my younger brother and me. I went to Vinten Elementary School. Then I went to Sunnyside for Junior High. Then I went to Jefferson High School and graduated from there in 1978. My older brother had lung cancer and died. It has been about six years. After high school, I went to live with my grandmother in Rossville. When my grandmother got sick, my mother and stepfather came out from California and took care of her until she died. Finally, I got my first apartment on my own. My mother and stepfather bought a mobile home in the park. And I moved to Lafayette and got another apartment. I have lived there for ten years. I went to California to live, but I came back to Indiana to live. I came back because I wanted to live in my home state. I didn't like the earthquakes. In the meantime, my father died on Christmas Day. This Christmas, it will be three years since he died.

I have two nephews and two nieces. My one nephew, who is married, lives in Indianapolis and has a baby who will be one year old in December. I went to San Francisco about three weeks ago to go to the wedding in Lake Tahoe. It was my nephew's wedding. We stayed in a rental cabin. One day, I went to a casino to gamble on a slot machine, but I lost my money. My mother, sister, sister-in-law and I flew out. We rented a car and drove all over San Francisco and on to Lake Tahoe. We came home the day after the wedding. The wedding was very nice and cool. There was a lot of family and friends. We went to a place called the Blue Onion for the rehearsal dinner. And another night before the wedding, we had pizza and miniature golf. We were up in the mountains. It was hard to breathe. The weather was nice and sunny. We drove to the San Francisco airport and returned the rental car. We flew to Salt Lake City airport to get something to eat and catch another flight to Indianapolis. We got home at 12:30 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. I stayed with my mother overnight. And I went home the next afternoon. I went back to LARA two days after I came back. I have been coming here for ten months.

I've learned a lot and met many new friends. I've met many new teachers. I come here five times a week. My hours are 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. I've mainly been working in math and reviewing other subjects. My hardest subject is math. I got my driver's license when I was in my thirties. I had a friend in Rossville who taught me how to drive. My car is a 1998 red Ford Escort. It is my fourth Ford car. It is paid off. I might be driving it the rest of my life. I hope you enjoyed my life story.

My Dream Job: International Tour Guide Shirley Liao

I desire to travel around the world and have lots of travel experience, learning about geography, ecology, history, foreign languages, speaking skills, organization skills, and management skills. I really especially like working with people and helping them have fun, and I have a good sense of humor, poise, an outgoing personality, a high energy level, and the ability to work independently.

I have learned a variety of skills from LARA:

- Loving people and caring about them
- Speaking correct English
- Dealing with different cultures
- Working well with people
- Researching websites
- Typing
- Designing brochures
- Managing financial resources

The more insights I have, the more valuable I become. My dream will come true!

My Dream Job By Taiba Bwardag

My name is Taiba Bwardag. I came to the United States on April 11, 2008 from Afghanistan with my husband and three sons. My two older sons are studying at Ivy Tech, and my youngest son is in the high school. I hope that they can study at Purdue University in the future. So I have to work and save money for their tuition.

If I have the chance, I would prefer to work in a grocery store, such as PayLess, Marsh, Wal-Mart, or McDonald's as a cook. Actually, I am very good at cooking rice, chicken, beef, pork, bread, cake, cookies, and snacks. I'd like to work with other people. I can also wear a uniform. The best time for me is from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

In order to find my dream job, I am trying my best to learn English and computers at LARA. Now I can communicate with others with simple English, and I can use Microsoft Word for English typing.

The Old Man

By Cherry Richardson

Salt and pepper hair
Gray tailored pants
He stands straight and poised,
watering thirsty blades
of grass.

I like the old man
who lives down the street.
I like the way he looks at me.
Whenever he sees me
it is always
as if it's
for
the first time.
He drinks in my beauty
as I breeze past.
I am the last drop of sherry
in his flask.
I know he wants me
but he's too
afraid to ask.

Artificial smile
Debutant airs
Raking cherry-red press-on nails
Through the weave in her hair

Here comes that girl
who lives down the street.
My heart flat-lines
when she looks at me.
Each time I see her
I wish
it was for the last time.
Upsetting forget-me-nots
As she tramps away
She is the last drop of venom
foraging through my vein.
Next time I see her
I'll ask her
to walk
On the other side of the street.

My Dream Job

By Elisa Guzman

My name is Elisa Guzman. I would like to start my own business. I would like to open a bakery. I love to make cakes and decorate them as well. I would need to buy different sizes and shapes of cake pans. I would need to find a store with a kitchen. I also need a big mixer, shelves, cake decorations, ingredients, and employees.

To make my cakes, I start by mixing ingredients together, pouring the batter into the pans, and baking them. After they come out of the oven, I let them cool off. Then I decorate them using frosting and cake decorations.

In order to get customers, I would need to make some kind of advertisement. Once I get customers into the store, I will be very busy, so I will need some help. I will hire some employees to help me. We will wake up early in the morning to make the cakes.

My Dream Job

By Alma Gutierrez

Interior Designer

I always dreamed of being an interior designer. When I was a child, I loved to draw houses and imagine the interiors of the kitchen, bathroom, and everything else; and now I still watch the TV shows about that. Every time when I go to another house, I start in my mind imagining different changes in the houses.

I know that in order to reach my goals, I need to improve my English skills first and then go to college. While in college, I would need to take some classes in Interior Design and Architecture.

Once I get my degrees, I would like to teach people of any background that they can have a beautiful home without spending a lot of money or being rich. I know it is too late because I'm getting too old for that, so now I would like to take some classes about child care and open a day care.

My Dream Job

By Leopoldine Kpegba

My name is Leopoldine Kpegba. As a dream job, I would like to teach. I could teach French, which is the language I know very well. That will be useful to people, and I will learn more.

I would like to be in a big, clean classroom with good lights, which I will decorate with the pictures of students and some of mine. I will sit in front of my desk near my documents.

I will always use my head, my hands, and sometimes my body. I would like to have the right tools to teach my class, such as books, notebooks, pictures, my programs, etc.

I would like to work with people who are helpful to each other and will respect themselves. Those might be my bosses, my colleagues, and my students. Sometimes, I will collaborate with students' parents or guardians for the well-being of our students. I will always be friendly with everyone.

I would like to wear my outfit that suits my job. But I would like to wear a uniform if it is demanded.

A full time job during the day would be my pleasure. That will help me to be devoted to myself and to my work because I always like to be known to do good work.

Teaching is my dream job, so I could renew my mind anytime. To teach is to learn twice. I could be helpful to the world. I will enjoy meeting many people from different countries, to know some of their cultures when doing some of their projects. I will enjoy break too, like winter break, spring break, and summer break. I will be glad every time one of my students progresses.

To do this, I will need to learn more English, graduate from college here, and apply for that great dream job.

My Dream Job

By Lyn Keary

My dream job? It's a tour guide. Why's that? I like to travel. Anywhere in the United States? No, just in the United States to learn about people and places. How would I travel around? I'd travel state to state taking a few weeks to see what's in each state. I would explore the areas with my groups and be the only tour guide. My attire would be appropriate to wherever I was. Like, if I was at Yosemite, I would wear a casual outfit, then if I were in a building giving a tour, I might wear a shirt. I would like to give day tours. Although there would be some night tours, I'll be working for a big company that sets me up on various tours in the United States, where the group will be on their own during the evening.

My Dream Job

By Carolyn Perkins

Office Worker

I would like to have an office job. I enjoy working with other people. I can answer the phones and direct the calls to the proper person. I know how to do sales and keep records of all correspondence. I feel that I could be a great asset to any employer. I am always willing to do whatever it takes to help. I feel that an employee is only as good as their boss will let them be. I believe that I could also be of great use in an elementary school. I love working with young children. My office experience could be of use in the office or library, either one. I feel that I could work in a factory office.

My Dream Job

By Carole Dutton

My dream job would be at the Salvation Army Homeless Shelter. I would like to be a resident assistant and also an assistant to the Shelter Director. The hours would be days, and the dress is casual.

My job would be working with the homeless people and serving lunch. Also, I would answer the phone, do filing, make copies, and pull all the food for three meals a day. When the director is gone or is in meetings, I would run the place by myself. The job is not boring because I am doing multiple tasks all day. I will also meet a lot of different people all the time, because you are only allowed to stay at this shelter for 30 to 60 days. I can't be hired right now because there isn't enough money in the budget. I am there now through the Title 5 program.

Stereotyping

By Anthony Wayne Crume

Stereotyping is a biased belief about a whole group of people based on insufficient evidence. A stereotype ignores an individual.

I think it is false reasoning because you know the saying, “You can’t judge a book by its cover.” I don’t think people should be making fun of each other just because of the color of their skin or the clothes they wear or whether they’re poor or rich. It shouldn’t matter. We are all the same on the inside. Maybe not on the outside, but on the inside, we are.

I think stereotyping is bad because you don’t need to be judging someone: you should judge yourself first. Like kids at school, look at how many cliques there are – there are a bunch, like the Mexicans, the blacks, the white gangsters, the preps, the scenes and the emos. For example, the emos always get picked on at school. Why, you ask? Well, because people who stereotype think that we cut ourselves and are depressed. They automatically think that all emos wear black. Wrong. We don’t always wear black. That’s stereotyping right there.

In conclusion, I have learned that stereotyping is bad and that you should not judge a book by its cover.

Resurgence

By Ildar Akhmadullia

It was many years ago; I was twelve. Being a smart and diligent student, I liked to study algebra, geography, and history; I was interested in astronomy and chemistry, but most of all, I liked mathematics. Schoolteachers loved me for that, but my classmates looked at me maliciously for finishing my quiz first in a class.

I was interested in all school programs, but only one was trouble for me. I didn’t like physical training because I wasn’t tall and strong like others. All my classmates jumped higher and ran faster than me. They mocked my unsuccessful attempt at the rope. I hated that rope. I didn’t play soccer because without my glasses, I couldn’t see anything. I had weak health, while the other students had weak knowledge, so I didn’t have friends. In fact, I was different from all of them and was hurt every day by my classmates. They called me “the geek.” I tried to ignore them and hide my suffering in a very deep place in my soul, but sometimes it was impossible to do.

I really was afraid of only one boy in our school, who was the head of a teen band in our region. I didn't know his real name; all the boys called him "The Scar" because he had a jagged scar on his right cheek. He came to our class from jail and was three years older than me. Scar was a headache for our teachers. He didn't like to study, and it was a very joyful day for me when he was absent. All the students were scared of him because he was impudent and strong. Actually, none of them could say anything against him, and his behavior was an "example" to others. Holding Scar's hand counted as an "honor" for the boys because he was a law and a power in their relationships.

One day at break time, I was sitting and eating my sandwich in the schoolyard. Scar, with a sarcastic smile on his face, came to me with his friends; he put his hand on my shoulder and asked, "Why are you trying to be the teachers' pet? They are old 'stupid chickens.' They can't give you money or respect like I can. Stay with me! I am looking for a smart boy like you, and you have to help me with one deal." I was in a panic when I heard it, but, trying to be imperturbable, I continued to eat my lunch. "Sorry, I am not interested," I muttered, and after a second I felt a strong thwack at my stomach and then again, and again, and again . . . Somebody pushed me, and I fell on the grass. All the boys of our school were standing around and laughing at me while I was lying on the dirty floor. Scar took my glasses and asked me, "Hey! You don't respect me?" Then he broke them. It was a very sad day in my life.

I tried to hide my bruises from my parents; they knew nothing about my school life. I couldn't tell them about what happened. I hated my school and myself for my flaccid character, and I hoped that one day it would be over. Only studying was very interesting to me at that time.

After a week, my math teacher told me, "There will be a City Math Competition next month. I'd like to see you there from our school." I was very glad and began to spend all free time studying math in the school after classes with my teacher, and at home, too. It was a fresh breath in my life. I anticipated the competition like an impatient child waiting for his birthday.

Soon the competition day came. The weather was fine and the sun was shining. I rushed to the Pedagogical Institute, where all the clever boys and girls joined together to compete in knowledge skills and to determine the best of the best. My math teacher came too. Saying something to support me, she helped to fill out my application forms. I felt excited and happy. Around me were sitting many clever heads, very talented and able. I thought that I was one of them. This great idea inspired me. It was excellent to forget just for a second about my stupid classmates. I wasn't a "geek" here; for the first time in my life, I was free of humiliation. I was that person who I am.

After two weeks, I was told that I got second place at the City Math Competition; I was happy. My math teacher met with my parents and

suggested that I be given the opportunity to study at another school. Soon I began my fall semester at the Special Math School, where I met many new friends. After a year, I heard that Scar was taken by the police and locked up in jail.

Basketball

By Michael Smith

If I had the opportunity to teach something I know to someone else, I would teach about the game of basketball. I have played basketball my whole life, and I would like to share my knowledge with you. There are three basic things you need to understand to enjoy watching or playing this game. They are ball handling skills and rules, shooting, and teamwork.

First, I will tell you about ball handling skills and rules. You must always dribble the ball if you are moving. You are not allowed to pick it up and carry it. If you do, you will be called for traveling, and the other team will get the ball. You also have to dribble with only one hand or the other, or you will get a penalty for double-dribble. To get really good, it is important to practice your dribbling. It takes time to get really good at it. I would suggest working on this skill at least 20 minutes every day if you are serious about learning to play basketball well.

Next, I would like to give you some tips about shooting the basketball. There are two times when you can shoot the ball. One is when you have been fouled and are shooting a free throw. Then you get to stand on the designated line, and no one can get in your way while you shoot. Depending on the type of foul, you may get one shot or two. The other time is when you have the ball during action on the court. Then, you will have other players around you, and the opposing team will be trying to block your shot or keep you from getting a good angle on the basket. It is important to practice several different types of shooting for different situations. You should practice free throws after you have been running, so you can feel a game type of situation. You should work on shooting with both your left and right hands while moving with the basketball in order to be able to score during a game. Since shooting is the way you score during a game, I would suggest that you practice shooting at least 50 to 100 shots every day in practice.

Finally, I would like to discuss teamwork. A team has 15 players. The game is played with only five players from each team on the court. As a team you work together to beat the other team. If one man tried to win a game by himself, he would surely lose. No matter how good one person is, he can't take on five players by himself. A team has to pass the ball around, run their plays, and give each player the opportunity to make a play and score a basket.

If I had the opportunity to teach something I know to someone else, I would teach about the game of basketball. I have shared my knowledge with you in this essay. I told you about the three basic things you need to understand in order to enjoy watching or playing this game, ball handling skills and rules, shooting, and teamwork. If you like a team sport, then you would surely love the game of basketball.

My Dream Job

By Greg Watkins

My dream job is to be a Substance Abuse Counselor. I have dreamt of one day having a job that I'll get respect, dignity, and honor. I want a job that I'll love and enjoy. I have started on accomplishing my dream by enrolling at Ivy Tech. I've also spoken with an advisor about what type of classes I need. I know this will be a job where I'll be able to dress comfortably and have decent hours. I want a career where I can have my own office with a big window overlooking a park with a country setting of some type. This will be an office where my patients and I will feel comfortable and at ease in discussing personal problems. This will be a career that I can be proud of and say that I achieved with hard work and dedication—a career that will make my children proud. By my giving them a good example, hopefully, they too will be able to get their dream jobs.

A Love that Never Happened

By Krystle Smith

At one point in time, I cared for you a lot. Now it seems we should've never met. I knew you belonged to someone else, but I couldn't resist temptation. I told myself I was strong, but when I was with you I was weak. It's like you put a spell on me. I have no idea when it wore off, but it did, Love. Don't get me wrong – you're a great person. You just have to understand there will never be an "us" – just a "you" and a "me." I know you could never feel for me the way I did for you.

You walked into my life when I was vulnerable; I feel you took advantage of me. Why did I fall for someone I knew I could never be with? Sometimes I miss you and wonder what you're doing, and will you ever call again. Then again, other days I could care less.

I know what your purpose was in finding me. I've accepted it. Have you? I accept the fact that you're in love with someone else. Can you let go when it's time for me to love someone who truly wants me? I'm hoping so, but then again, I'm hoping you'll finally be able to tell me how you truly feel about "us."

Sometimes you act like you don't want me, like if I were to drop you at any second now, you wouldn't be sad. At other times you act like you'd be lost without me, because I hear jealousy in your voice when I speak of other guys.

So tell me what you want before I walk out on your life forever.

My Dream Job

By Scott Alva

My name is Scott "Chooch" Alva. My dream job is to be a Substance Abuse Counselor. I want to be a counselor so I can help others who have the disease of addiction. Having been down that road myself and almost losing my life due to my addictions, I want to share my experiences with others to help them overcome this deadly disease.

I would like to work in a treatment center where I could provide one-on-one counseling and work with groups. I would really like the chance to work with teenagers. With my past experiences, I feel I could relate to them and know where they are coming from and, hopefully, help them.

I have already started towards my goal by enrolling in Ivy Tech in the area of Human Services. I will start classes in the fall.

My Dream Job

By Graciela Garibay

My name is Graciela Garibay. My dream job is to be a teacher. I enjoy working with different ages of children. Since I was a young girl, I have always liked to teach and take care of children. I thank God for giving me five of them. I enjoy my family even more now that I have time for my kids since my husband and I are dislocated from work.

I have volunteered at my children's schools. I have helped in the kitchen, gone on field trips, and helped with the music shows in whatever way I could. I love to teach kids, and when we lived in Mexico, I helped teach in the classrooms at school and was a playground helper. To be a teacher in the United States, I need to continue improving my English skills and look into taking classes to become a teacher.

My Dream Job

By James Smith

My name is James Smith, and my dream job is to be a Private Investor. I have wanted and planned this for several years. I want to spend my retirement years doing something I have always wanted to do but had too many other priorities.

I would do my investing using the computer on a weekly basis with small variances in scheduling each day but very similar. I would work on a very limited basis with two other people, with short moments of very limited conversation, but primarily I would be working alone. I would work most days dressed as I please, in my PJs with a nice hot chocolate, or in leisure clothes, or in a suit, or however I please. I would work during the day with the evenings being mine. My weekends would be completely free to do what I please. I can do this because I have prepared for it.

I have a thorough, doable, and workable plan. There would be the usual ups and downs, but normally no big surprises. All would go according to my general well thought-out, planned model. I would reach my dream job similar to a person working on a very difficult puzzle, but a very doable, workable solution. As I work towards my dream job, I need to study, analyze, and alter my solutions as I go.

Self-Concept

By Anthony Wayne Crume

Self-concept is a collection of perceptions about every aspect of your being, including your physical and mental capabilities, your vocational potential, and your communication abilities.

Self-concept is positive. It not only affects your communication, but your self-esteem too.

I do think it affects you as a person. If someone says you're fat, what do you do? You go home and judge yourself in the bathroom mirror, thinking that you're fat, which in turn lowers your self-esteem.

How to Appreciate Music

By Tony Hill

If I had the opportunity to teach something I know to other people, I would teach them about different types of music. I enjoy both writing and listening to music. I would like to teach people how to appreciate my favorite styles, which are rhythm-and-blues, rap, and pop.

Rhythm-and-blues, which is sometimes just called R and B, is a very soulful musical art form. It's about the sound. It comes from what is within a person. The sound is usually mellow and often includes beautiful harmony. One of my own R and B compositions is called "Last Night." In order to help someone appreciate this sound, I would have them listen to my song and some other good examples of this type of music. I would also introduce them to the book *All You Need to Know about the Music Business*. It has a lot of good information about all the musical styles in it. It also gives you information about the music business and how to promote yourself and your songs.

Rap is another way of expressing what is inside a person. It's actually poetry with a beat behind it. Rap is a type of wordplay. It's about creating a beat by rhyming words in clever patterns. One of my rap songs is called "I Say." I have been creating rap songs for over twelve years. It is my favorite style of music to write, and I am just beginning to be recognized as a professional musician in this area. To help someone learn about rap, I would have them write a rap of their own and perform it for me. We would focus on the wordplay, finding metaphors and punch lines that work, and how to make the words follow a beat or rhythm.

Pop music mixes R and B and rap styles. It expresses feelings in the same way, but with a more up-tempo sound. Pop music is a very popular sound in the world today. One of my pop songs is called "Going Hard." Pop is a little easier to write because you don't have to search for rhyming words and focus so much on the lyrics. In pop music, you can focus more on the sound. I would have the person learning about music listen to some of this type of music, too.

Finally, I would play some different types of music and ask my student to identify the type of song each example is. I would review the three styles of music I had taught them, which are R and B, rap, and pop. Of course, the whole point of this is to help someone appreciate the different styles of music. I love to write and listen to music, and it would make me happy to help someone else discover a love of music, too.

Words for My Son

By Dick Mullen

Don't listen to the words
Shouldn't
Wouldn't
Couldn't
And can't

These are just words used by
Quitters
Losers
Liars
Failures
And fools

Always listen to the words
Should
Would
Could
And can

These are the words used by
Victors
Conquerors
Winners
Champions
And Eagles

These are the words that make you a
man

Yet follow these words and
You will suffer
You will ache
You will grieve
And you will be wounded

To follow these words
You must persist
You must prevail
You must sustain
You must endure

Follow your heart's words
Chase after your dreams
Don't be afraid to fall
Always, always give it your all

Reach for the summit
Go for the peak
The only thing holding you back
Is the words other people speak

And in the end
You will see
With the right words you will stand
taller
Than the words you dreamed you
could be

These words will test your will
These words will push your skill
So no words like I won't
Only words like I will

These are my words I give you today
Yet these are the words I will always
say
No matter what you do
I will always, always say these words, I
love you

To Begin Anew By Carrie N. Rust

I am an amateur songwriter. I believe that certain talents are entrusted to certain individuals by our Creator and must be developed to our greatest potential. At nine, I recorded my first coherent poem. Continuing to write children's verses, I began my development as a poet, eventually writing parodies of popular songs, and I used popular songs as my models for love ballads and novelty songs. In early adolescence, I began to compose more serious songs, lofty pieces including Christian themes. As a child and as a young adult, I wrote over 200 poems and songs. Shortly after graduating from high school, I published a collection of poems expressing my Christian faith. Since then, I've sharpened my skills on many types of writing.

In recent years, I have been composing original music. Most of my compositions have been written, recorded, or performed for the inspiration or delight of my family members, for churches, or for small gatherings. I have not been so much interested in fame and fortune as in sharing faith and fun. My business card is given to interested representatives of organizations, which leads to invitations to perform and sometimes to resources. Wherever I go, I'm invited. In the business of working to provide oneself with life's necessities, more satisfying prospects are often crowded out, so for some time, I have not considered songwriting/singing as a career. Also, because of the sporadic nature or caprice of the muse, writing is seldom lucrative for amateurs.

At times, writing in any genre can be a lonely occupation. Inspiration can strike suddenly or reveal itself as painfully slow, in the middle of the night, or in the middle of some other activity. But then, there's the sheer excitement of having created something lovely or meaningful, and sometimes of having blessed another. Composing or singing is an activity that can be performed in the most casual of clothes in the most private setting while making notes with pen and paper, composing on a typewriter, listening to music in my head. Or I can be awakened in the night by a catchy phrase or tune that demands to be sung. Then, at times, the setting can be quite formal. If I'm singing at a church, I dress in my "Sunday best." Performing at other times may call for informal street clothes.

Recently, I have been searching, and sometimes finding, online leads of organizations and advisories for amateur musicians, for publishers and equipment to help me to better organize my efforts. I've arrived at a place now where I can see, as so often happens, that I have built a foundation for a career in music, and all that remains is to enlarge my audience by using what I have learned to begin a new career in earnest.

My Dream Job

By Marcus W. Koechig

My dream job involves fishing for a living. This is not commercial fishing I am speaking of; rather, it is sport fishing for freshwater species, such as bass, muskellunge, pike, and walleye. The only way to make a living at this sort of thing is to compete as a professional.

Working conditions for sport fishermen are not confined to the usual nine to five, with a regulation business suit to match. Fishing clothes, such as specialized shirts and pants along with personal flotation devices, usually are worn. Good headgear to keep off the sun and polarized sunglasses also should be worn. Foul weather gear needs to be taken along on every trip, no matter how promising the weather. The hours for sport fishing depend on the tournaments one enters, but they usually start fairly early in the morning.

The initial outlay to get involved in competitive sport fishing is relatively daunting. The price for a good all-around boat would start at around \$30,000, including the motor. Then there are the trailer and truck that need to move from lake to lake to get from one tournament to the other. Since so much time would be spent on the road, there also are lodging and meal expenses to take into consideration, along with fuel for the truck and the boat.

The only way for a person with no money to get involved in this type of work is to start in small local tournaments with a view toward garnering attention from potential sponsors. From there, it would be a long climb to even approach the middle ranks of competitive fishermen.

One aspect of this job that appeals to me is that I would be able to work by myself and need to rely on no one else. It would be up to me to get up, get to the lake, launch the boat, and catch the fish. I would have to take direction from no one and would not have to play office politics.

My Dream Job

By Tim Powell

My dream job: I have always loved to play billiards. What a great way to meet people and have fun! Playing a game that is challenging and fun to play, and to instruct new players in an organized setting, and make enough money to supplement my income at the same time would be like a dream come true.

My dream job would be to own an American Poolplayers franchise, APA, in an area that I would live in and run my business. This would be a one-person business that would set up places to play and to recruit new players,

male and female, to play in a league setting. There would be different formats, such as singles, teams, Jack and Jill, eight ball, nine ball, double jeopardy, and travel leagues.

Work time would be late afternoons and early evenings, with some weekends involved due to tournaments. I would be in casual dress at all times except when visiting the corporate office for business reasons.

Buying an APA franchise is easy to do, but you must obtain a good area. To do this would be fairly easy to do, as one would only need to contact the APA by logging on to www.poolplayers.com. A job like this would allow me to pursue my passion for billiards and keep me active. I would love to have this as my dream job.

My Ideal Job

By Carolyn Thompson

My ideal job would be working in an office environment as a receptionist and secretary. I would enjoy having contact with a variety of people, greeting and meeting the public and then directing them to the areas that best meet their needs. I would enjoy writing professional documents for others. I would also enjoy other office responsibilities such as emailing, filing, scheduling travel opportunities, answering phones, and assisting clients.

Monday through Friday the appropriate dress for this job would be business attire. The hours for this position could vary between 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. start time and 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. end time. Lunchtime would be for an hour each day.

This ideal job would allow me to grow professionally in many ways. I could attend conferences to enhance the skills that I need to fulfill my job tasks. Requirements for this position include telephone etiquette and computer skills in MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc. I would need to be able to multi-task professionally.

I would enjoy the opportunity to be a receptionist or secretary because this job would allow me to learn a variety of office experiences. I am a dependable, reliable, and responsible individual. I am a people-oriented person. I enjoy helping others; it allows me to use my Early Childhood Education teaching skills to assist others. Through the Lafayette Adult Resource Academy I am gaining the computer knowledge needed to use in any office job. I am grateful for the opportunities that are before me to consider an office position in the near future.

My Dream Job

By Hector S. Campos

My name is Hector S. Campos, and my dream job includes a good position with good insurance and good pay. I want to be able to send my son and daughter to college and have good insurance, because someday, we may need it.

I like welding steel and molding steel into decorative fences. I like to work with other people in exchanging ideas, because we should never stop learning. I like jobs where you can dress in blue jeans, t-shirts, boots, or a uniform. I prefer working on the first shift, but if it is not possible, I would work in the afternoons.

I am a welder, but not certified. I can do jobs with steel, like steel decorative fences, window protectors, and some other jobs with steel. And I have my dream that someday I will start my own business in steel decorative fences.

My Dream Job

By Rebecca Graves

My ideal job is to be a teacher's aide in elementary school. I would prefer preschool through 3rd grade, or possibly a mentally impaired class. As a teacher's aide, I would work with individual students or small groups to reinforce new skills. Monitoring work, correcting papers, and supervising students during play periods are also responsibilities of a teacher's aide.

I enjoy the eagerness and enthusiasm of this age group when everything is new. I would enjoy being a part of that experience. I have the required high school diploma to apply for this position. I have worked as an LPN and can assist the certified staff with toileting and clothing routines. I have the emotional maturity and stability to be successful in this position. I am also able to assist staff with clerical and instructional duties.

A Day to Learn to Cherish Friendship

By Minzhi Wang

It was a typical day in the summer, a day when I was still on vacation from junior middle school, hot though cloudy without any breeze. Cicadas on the trees scattered along the riverbank or in the farmland were chirruping their monotonous and boring songs. The river, with its sand, mud, weeds, and different sizes of stones, flowed through the village, clear and shallow, although not like what it is today. What's important: The river is always cold on a hot day, and it was a suitable time for me to catch crabs. Pulling up our pants, wading into the stream, and bending down, my young brother and I lifted stones so carefully as not to stir the water surface and tried to find crabs. What an enjoyable time it once was!

Just at that time, some familiar voices jumped into my ears. It was my friends, two girls and three boys, who were riding bicycles across the dam. I lifted myself and yelled *hello* to them excitedly. Surprisingly, they stopped and looked at me without noticing anything strange. I had no doubt that they must have been to my home to get me and were now preparing to invite another friend near the river; I inquired where they were going and asked them to wait for me to go back home so we could ride together.

Sprinting back home, I asked my mother if my friends had been here. Surprised and disappointed, I stood for about one minute after getting a negative reply. I felt lost because they were supposed to always invite me to join any activity and also embarrassed because I had asked them to wait for me. It was a dilemma; however, I decided to go with them. Abandoning any sadness, I pulled my bike out and rode to them.

We are still the best of friends nowadays, and maybe it was on that special day that I realized how much I cared about them. Moreover, I learned not to always be passive and to include everyone: stand with them; consider their feelings to avoid what I've once felt: no one outside. Every summer or winter holiday, if I am at home, I'll go and meet all of them and share happy and unhappy things together.

Cherish our friendship!

My Dream Job

By Kenny Burgess

My name is Kenny Burgess. My dream job is to be a rock star. I want to be a rock star so I can make a lot of money, and I like really loud music. There would be three other people in my band, a bass player, a drummer, and a singer. I would play lead guitar. We would play at big arenas in front of thousands of people. One thing that I wouldn't have to worry about is people telling me what to wear or how short my hair has to be. I would only perform on the weekends. I would be able to write songs, produce CDs, and practice with my band during the week. I already know how to play the guitar and was in a band when I was younger. We practiced in my parents' garage and even played at a few parties. To reach my dream, I would need to hold auditions for the other three band members and start practicing as a group.

My Dream Job

By Shrangho Baha

My name is Shrangho Baha. I came to the United States nine years ago, alone. Now I have an American Green Card. Because my husband and three sons are in Afghanistan, I want to earn money to support myself and save money for my family that plans to move to the United States.

My dream job is to work for a grocery store such as Wal-Mart, Payless, Marsh, or McDonald's. I can cook meals, cake, bread, and snacks and clean dishes for the store. The best time for me is from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday. I have been studying English at LARA for five years, and I can communicate with others with simple English.

My Dream Job

By Connie Jacobs

I would love to own and operate my own woodworking shop. I would build coffee tables, end tables, bookcases, china cabinets, knickknack shelves and much more. I prefer building with pine wood but would also use ash, oak, cedar, cherry, etc. I would build and finish products that I chose but would also build to other people's specifications. I would also refinish old furniture. I would apply for a first time business loan to get my business started. Hopefully my business would grow from having customers purchase some of my merchandise and then show it to other people, who would then come into the shop to look around.

I could set my own hours for working when first starting out in order to get enough merchandise on display to begin to sell to the public. I would work on my own until I made enough money to hire someone to be my assistant.

Made Decisions by Myself

By Xu Qian

A gentle breeze blew through my hair. The golden red sun was setting. I was walking on my way home. The beautiful views beside the road made me relax. Yes, it was the last day of July, and I would have a long summer vacation starting tomorrow.

On my way home, I kept thinking about how to spend my whole summer holiday. "It should be a fun, meaningful, relaxed holiday," I believed firmly. I even believed that I could stay in bed until the sun penetrated the curtain and fell on my upturned face every morning. In the afternoon, I could go swimming with my friends or read some appealing books, which I had never read before. In brief, I should do everything according to my own inclinations.

After awhile, I was at my doorstep. I opened the gate slowly and leisurely walked up to the kitchen where my parents were staying. The kitchen was so steaming hot that I could not see my parents' faces clearly. My mother was busy with boiling soup, and my dear father was helping her to prepare the side dishes. Neither of them realized that I had returned, but I could not help telling them the news, so I broke the busy scene with a loud voice: "Dad, Mum, after a semester of nervous study, I'm free now." My dad turned around and glanced at me quickly, then said, "No, you are not free. You will attend painting class starting tomorrow. Your mum and I have registered you in the class." After hearing this news, I felt like a kite that was free flying in the sky and then pulled back suddenly by the owner. I was not interested in painting, for I had no patience in spending two or three hours on one picture.

The presentation of the relationship between light and objects is really difficult for me. I didn't understand why my parents always made decisions for me without my consent. They were being arbitrary, so I told them I would not take the class. My mother's reaction to my reply was indifferent. She tasted the soup with a spoon and put some salt in it. Then she turned to my father and asked my father whether he would consider canceling my allowance if I didn't take the class. In this situation, whatever I said meant nothing, so I surrendered to them and decided to go.

I spent all the holiday in the painting class. The turning point appeared at the end of the class. The teacher told my parents that I had no talent in painting at all. Maybe I could try something else. My parents were so disappointed. They decided not to push me to do anything against my will anymore, and I can make all the decisions by myself now.

Finally, I am free and independent. I'm the winner, although I have paid a high price – the whole summer vacation.

My Dream Job

By Terry Kaufman

Have you ever flown in an airplane? Have you ever flown an airplane? Have you ever looked up and seen an airplane passing by and wished you were flying it? I do every day. My dream job would be piloting for a freight company.

There is a lot involved before you ever set foot in the cockpit: there are flight plans, weather reports, and deciding how much fuel you will need for the flight. For instance, for a flight from Indianapolis, Indiana to Miami, Florida, the first thing you need is a flight plan. This lets the FCC know your intentions and your departure and arrival times. It also helps you figure out how much fuel you will need. The weight of cargo and passengers helps decide how much fuel you will need. You also need to know the wind direction so that you know what runway you will be using. You take off into the wind. You also need to check weather patterns and look for problem areas you may need to avoid.

The hours can be long and at any time of day. You can run into delays beyond your control, such as waiting for a storm system to pass. As the pilot, it is your responsibility for safe operation of your aircraft. Safety is the most important part of your job, and it becomes even more important once you are inside the cockpit. You have several system checks to perform before you are ready to taxi.

Once system checks are completed, you can start the engines. Now you are ready to contact ground control. You say, “This is Cessna 53082 heavy ready to taxi, I have alpha.” What do you mean when you say, “I have alpha”? Well, when the pilot is listening to the weather reports, he is given information about the weather, wind direction, and instrument settings, which are changing all the time. Ground control assigns a letter of the alphabet to these, and when they change, they update the information, and the letter of the alphabet also changes. If the report needs to be updated, ground control will repeat these updates so you can make safety-conscious decisions. Then you may have to wait for a response, because ground control is responsible for all taxiing aircraft, and more often than not they are very busy.

When they do respond, they will say “Cessna 53082 this is ground control, taxi to runway 28 and hold fast.” Your response is “Cessna 53082 taxiing to runway 28 and holding fast.” You wait a couple of seconds to make sure you have heard the instructions correctly and begin to taxi to runway 28. Once you get a couple of hundred feet from runway 28 you contact ground control again, “Cessna 53082 holding for traffic at runway 28.” Then the ground control will say, “Cessna 53082 taxi across runway 28 and continue to runway 5 and prepare for take-off.” You, of course, repeat ground control’s instructions and wait a couple of seconds to make sure you heard them correctly. Then you proceed to runway 5 and do your run-up and wait for ground control to pass you off to the tower. Once ground control has passed you to the tower, they will say, “Cessna 53082 hold fast at runway 5 and turn your radio to frequency 135.2.”

Now you are ready for take-off; all you need is the tower’s permission. When you get that permission the tower will say, “Cessna 53082 taxi onto the runway and stop.” You repeat what the tower said just like you did with ground. When it is safe for you to start your take-off roll, the tower will say, “Cessna 53082 you are cleared for take-off. At 1,500 feet turn right.” Then, you guessed it, you repeat their instructions, “Cessna 53082 clear for take-off at 1,500 feet request permission to turn right.” The tower will approve or disapprove your request. The tower will say, “Cessna 53082 turn right approved.”

Now that we are flying we will be assigned an altitude and a heading while we always look for other aircraft. When you reach your destination the process is reversed.

My First Impression

By Amanda Marie Steckel

It has been said that the first sentence in any piece of writing is the most important, more so than the title, the body, or the close. The first sentence is what draws you in, what intrigues you, what compels you to want to find out what the story is about. But what if the opening line is bull crap? What if I began my story with, “I want to tell you about the best love I’ve ever known,” and then proceeded to tell you about why I thought women were superior to men? What if I began with, “She was the biggest witch I ever knew,” and told you about my St. Bernard? This led me to realize that life itself is very much like an essay or a short story. It has a beginning, a middle and an end. We all have a who, what, where, when, why, and how.

They say not to judge a book by its cover, but they also say you only get one chance to make a first impression. Is that first impression not like our opening sentence, sometimes true to our story but also often misleading? Do we not consistently say, “Hello, my name is so-and-so, I’m 27 years old, a mother of two and yada, yada, yada”? Is that not the mindless dribble we recite for all we meet? But is that really true to our story? Is that all we are? When do we get to say, “Hello, my middle name is Marie, my bad habits are this, that, and the other, I can’t be trusted with a secret, and I hope I die before my loved ones”? I wonder, if I started this way, what the impression would be of me? How would my life’s opening sentence begin? I guess, depending on my mood and my opinion of myself that day, I might begin very differently. Today I might open with, “An intriguing person such as myself needs no opening sentence.” If asked tomorrow, I might say, “Like a vapor, I form with my head in the clouds.” Each option leaves you with a completely different impression of the story to follow.

At 27 years old, I wonder if my story would be at the beginning, middle, or end? I guess the only way life does not resemble a story is that we never get to write our own ending. We leave this world with a sort of unfinished tale. For me as a writer and avid reader, I hate to leave a story without knowing the ending. So I hereby request that my eulogy begin with, “In conclusion . . .” What would be said about me, about my life so far? Would my family members cry and say, “She was a loving wife and mother, a loyal friend, sister, and daughter”? Would they say, “Amanda always marched to the beat of her own drum and loved learning about life the hard way”? Could they summarize my life into a metaphor? I was a ray of sunshine or a cloudy day. Perhaps they would say I was partly sunny with a chance of showers.

I guess I’ll never know. But I do know that even more important than my ending is my beginning, so here it is. My name is Amanda, and my story starts today.

My Dream Job

By Tim Glanders

We're at Conseco Field House in Indianapolis, Indiana. This is the home of the Indiana Pacers. I am head basketball coach. We have a packed house. It is standing room only. I'm dressed casual, a polo shirt and slacks. We are playing the Los Angeles Lakers this Saturday afternoon for the NBA Championship. This is the final game.

I am in the final year of my 5-year contract worth 2.5 million dollars. The hours I put in are never ending. We have never won an NBA Championship. This might be the last chance we will ever have during my career. The series is tied at 3-3. The best of 7 games. The Lakers are ahead 89-88 with 22 seconds left on the clock. The game starts back when they throw the ball in, but we intercept the ball and call a timeout. We set up a play. The game starts back up when our guard throws the ball to our other guard, who throws the ball to our center, who cuts toward the basket and jams the ball in. The crowd goes wild, and we win the NBA Championship 90-88.

My Dream Job

By Cindy Chapman

My dream job is to be a design consultant. I love walking into a beautifully decorated/designed room. I find myself looking at the smallest details.

I have worked as a design consultant previously for a few different stores while living in Tucson, Arizona. The first store was The Bedroom Superstore. I accessorized the different room layouts while working as a customer service representative. I also worked for Terri's Designs as a furniture salesperson and design consultant.

The best way to get started is to get a degree in Interior Design, which I do have. Starting out in a furniture store or small design house is best. While working as a salesperson, you can help clients choose their furniture /accessories for the space they are looking to decorate. As you build rapport with your clients, you can get outside work through word of mouth. Eventually, you may be able to work as an independent contractor through a design house, furniture store, or homebuilder.

My goal is to be an independent contractor, possibly working for some of the furniture stores here in Lafayette. I am a great salesperson and very sociable. Being able to have a flexible schedule would be the best scenario for my son and myself.

My Dream Job

By Earl Cox

I thought I had my dream job; it was in manufacturing, and I loved it. I worked at my plant for over 31 years and was very fortunate that it was a Union Shop. I had opportunities that I never dreamed would ever happen to me. I was entrusted by my fellow workers and was elected to many leadership positions in my Local and outside of my Local within the region. I was able to go to many training workshops and seminars, where I learned many invaluable techniques and limitless knowledge. With this knowledge I was able to help my fellow workers to better their lives and living standards. I also started to volunteer my time in the community and at other functions that had a Union presence, and I met many others within that circle and made many friends.

When my plant closed in 2003, I had to start all over again, and my family and I moved to Lafayette, where I got my new job. I was fortunate that this facility was also a Union Shop, and as soon as I was able, I started to help and volunteer wherever I was needed. This is how I got my “dream job;” if my plant hadn’t closed and I hadn’t had to seek other employment, I never would have applied and gotten the job I have now. I am now the AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison with the United Way of Greater Lafayette, and I never would have dreamed that I would ever be in this type of a job. I will say one thing: if I had not been a Union member or decided to be active in my Union, I never would have gotten this job or any other like it.

Some Truth About Me

By Denise Valentine

Growing up in Detroit was not that bad for me. So I thought. I had family and friends throughout the neighborhood. As a child, it was great, but as a teenager, no, not so great. Now as a mother, I can see it was not good for my children.

First of all, when I was growing up my parents were still together. We did family things, and it was all about us. That was back in the 80s when it was all about family and sticking together. We were so young, so innocent.

Second, as the teenage years came along, life started getting harder. My parents divorced, and that's when the streets opened up to me. I hung around gang members, skipped school, and was out on my own at fifteen years old. No one tried to stop me, so I did whatever I wanted. My friends looked out after me while my parents were trying to find themselves. I had no guidance during this time, so I turned to the gangs. This is back in the 90s when it started getting bad in Detroit. My friends were either dead or in jail. My life has been involved in that since I was fourteen. I am now thirty-one and a changed woman.

Third, it was not good for me there. I have three wonderful children, whom I raise alone. I did not want them to grow up the way I did. It is worse in Detroit now than when I was growing up. My children deserve the best! I took it upon myself to change my lifestyle. So I packed us up and moved out of state.

Overall, my life in Detroit was a struggle. Maybe it's not just Detroit, but that's where I grew up. Being a teenager and being from a broken home is hard. My kids are now being raised in a broken home, but I refuse to let them slip away without a fight. I try to better my life, my kids' lives, and my dad's life just by getting out of the trap I was in—Detroit.

It took a lot for me to get up and just leave the way I did. Thanks to my friend Clara and a person named Luis, I was able to take the next step to change my life. Clara has always been my mom that's not my mom. She has been there for me since the day we met. I met Clara when I was walking around the neighborhood. She used to see my kids and me all the time. I was in the process of getting a job, and I was trying to find a good sitter for my kids. The one I had was not working out at all. My kids' dad was around, but he wouldn't help me. Clara stepped up and asked me what was going on. I ended up breaking down and telling her everything: how I was homeless with nowhere to go, about the kids' dad not trying to help, and that I didn't know what I was going to do or where I was going to end up.

I had my kids with me at all times. I was scared and I was worried, just because of my kids. Clara has a son, and he and his girlfriend let me stay in the back apartment at their place. We cleaned it up, and it was good enough. Clara took me to get a job. I worked at this place called AJM. We packed paper plates. Finally, I was doing well.

Or so I thought—the owner of the building made my kids and me leave the apartment. He didn't know we were there, so I was trespassing. It helped me out for a while, but then we found an upper flat around the block. Clara helped me get situated over there. But, not long after that, the landlord cut off my lights and gas. Someone had taken half of my rent money. I mean, everything just fell apart. I tried to survive the best way I could without calling Clara. I thought about her all of the time, but I was too ashamed to call her for help. In the meantime, we were cold and had to find a hot shower or bath. The kids' dad came to me because his fourteen-year-old girlfriend's mother kicked him out. So he came to me and, like a dumbass, I let him stay. He did not provide anything to help us stay warm. He did nothing! One day, he just up and said, "See you later," and I haven't seen him since.

So then I started having issues with this other guy—he burned my door down while me and my kids were in the house and took the only light we had. The next thing you know, the landlord kicked me out, because he said I owed him money; but I had a receipt to prove him wrong. That didn't matter because the sheriffs came and threw all my stuff into a dumpster. They made me and my two daughters leave the house in the middle of winter. I went down to my grandma's and called my aunt. I told her I wanted to call Clara, but I was scared she wouldn't help me. My aunt told me, "All you can do is try." So I did! I called Clara and cried my eyes out. I told her how sorry I was and how bad I felt. Clara said, "Oh my God, Denise, where are you at? I'm on my way!" So once again, we end up with Clara. She took my kids and me and drove around looking for another place to live. We stayed with her and her boyfriend at the time. I had to find another job and everything.

I thought to myself, "How many times am I going to start over?" In the meantime, I am telling Clara everything that was going on when we weren't speaking. Next thing you know, I find a place on Gilbert Street in Detroit. This is the last house I lived in before I came to Lafayette, Indiana. Everything was going good on Gilbert. I had my gangsta' family stay with me. They helped take care of my kids and me. We were surviving but not doing it in the right way. I had to get out of there, 'cause I knew something was going to happen. So I woke up one day and said, "I'm ready to leave!" One of my friends at the time helped me get where I'm at today. He knew people here, and I had my own money to come to Lafayette.

So when I was for sure about my decision to leave, I told everyone. No one believed me, so I called Clara. She thought it was a good idea, so she helped me again! She drove my older kids and me to the bus station. I left my baby with her so I could get myself together. It broke our hearts to leave her, but we did it for a good reason. Me leaving had a huge effect on everyone! I didn't want to leave, but it was for my own good. My brothers, my dad, my lover, and everyone else were there to support my decision. I had only one person that did the opposite: my mom. She was not behind me at all. She was the only one, and I knew she was going to be negative about the whole thing. I really didn't tell her for her approval. I just told her to let her know I was leaving.

I called to check in with everyone that supported me on my way to Lafayette. When I called Clara, she told me that my mom was telling her that I wasn't going to make it and I was just going to end up back where I started! I didn't have time for negative talk with my mom, so I barely called her. My mom had my best friend convince me to go back home. They said they were going to help me. My mom was supposed to drive my baby to me, but instead, I fell for her trap. I had her come pick up my kids and me. I went back like a dumbass! I only stayed for two weeks because she didn't help me with anything! I couldn't deal with being there anymore. All she did was complain how she needed a job. I said, "You can get paid by the state if you keep the kids." She said, "No, I need my 401K plan! What else do you need help with?" I said, "Nothing! If you can't help me with my kids, then you can't help me at all!"

She said, "Well, you should have just stopped at one kid!" That set me off, so I got online and checked into the days and times I could leave again. I was talking to Clara and one of my girls and told them what happened. They both told me I should have listened to my own mother's instinct! Next thing you know, I said out of nowhere, "I'm leaving!" My mom said, "What? Where? When?" I said, "Back to Indiana! Sunday night!" I did that not even knowing where I was going to end up when I went back. I didn't care. I just wanted out! I could hear the Hood calling me, so I had to hurry up and leave. I had one last visit and I took all my kids and left again.

I didn't have anyone this time around, but I made it! I found help to get my kids and me to a shelter. I had half my paperwork taken care of from the first time I was here. So I got food benefits as soon as I touched down. We lived with a stranger, but I prayed every night! I joined different programs to help me get on my feet. I went to Transitional Housing for some help. They helped me with things like an address, food, clothes, job search, and school. That is how I learned about LARA (Lafayette Adult Resource Academy). I also got help from CFRC (Children and Family Resource Center). They helped me with things like housing, financial aid, transportation, clothes, and food. My caseworker from CFRC found me an apartment through Seeds of Hope.

Seeds of Hope is like a rehab. I did not join this program at first because it did not pertain to me. They asked me to attend one of their meetings to see if I liked it. They thought it would be good for me. So I filled out the paperwork to go to one meeting. I went and did not feel comfortable. So I never went after that. They gave me such a hard time about it. But they helped me with some things like bringing my dad here to help me, getting my kids some clothes, and household needs. They always told me, “If you need anything, let us know.” I never really did because I don’t depend on anyone for anything. They did help with some things; their program was not for me, though. It was good at that time, but I had to move on.

Now we stay in a nice home near the schools my children attend. I have help from my dad and one of my friends. I collect unemployment at this time, but I am in school at LARA for my GED. I am looking forward to taking my test and passing. After that, I have plans to go to school for massage therapy.

Well, this is just a little part of my life that I wanted to share. There is still so much I’ve been through, but I would have to write a book about it! I am proof people can turn their lives around if they want to. I am going to be honest: if it weren’t for my kids, I wouldn’t be here today. I love them so much. I’m glad I have them! Thank you Anthony, Josalyn, and Aaliyah. Mami loves you all very much!