

Applause

Volume 27,

Number 10

School of the Arts

North Charleston, SC

June 2026



SOA Graduating Class of 2026

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From the Editors

Dear Readers,

Thank you all for your endless support of *Applause* throughout the school year. I'm very proud to present the final issue of Volume 27. With eighty pages, this is our longest issue ever, our 26th graduation issue and our 220th issue in our twenty-seven year history.

Pages 22-44 are comprised of essays and surveys from the Class of 2026, and I highly recommend reading through them, as they give a close look at what it is like to attend SOA.

Additionally, there are plenty of other articles and photo spreads to help recap what an amazing year it's been. Thank you to all the parents who submitted congratulations to their graduates!

This will be my final issue as Editor-In-Chief. I have absolutely loved being a part of the *Applause* staff for the past three years, and I can tell it's going to be in great hands for the future!

My name is Lila Hayes, and I am a rising junior Creative Writing major. The year has come to an end, and we unfortunately have to say goodbye to our editor-in-chief. Next year, though, I'm excited to fill Luciano's shoes and take over the *Applause* with a great staff!

Your Editors,
Luciano Cusatis & Lila Hayes




Applause

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Lila Hayes

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Lila Hayes	Rachel Wheelon

John Cusatis, PhD, Advisor

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Cover by Luciano Cusatis



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by Lila Hayes

Seniors Reflect on Their Time at SOA

by the Class of 2026

Seniors Go All-Out for Spirit Week

by Luciano Cusatis

Applause Presents Final Performances of *All You Need is Love*

photos by Applause Staff

All You Need is Love: Songs of the 60's, the Applause sponsored concert, was performed two more times on May 2 and 3. The first was at No Bull Burger Bar in Park Circle, and the second, serving as the finale for the North Charleston Arts Festival, at the Charleston Convention Center. The two shows were both huge hits, and featured all twenty-two songs from the RMMT performance in January, alongside six new ones.



Mr. Martin Named CCSD Teacher of the Year!

Mr. Martin became SOA's first teacher to win Teacher of the Year at the district level, and he was celebrated at school with a surprise performance from the Middle School Vocalists. As part of the celebration, he was given the opportunity to throw out the ceremonial first pitch at the Riverdogs game on Sunday, May 17th, and it was a perfect strike!



Evelyn Gwin



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A Look at Creative Writing's Highlights from This Year

by Ms. Detiberus, Mr. Hammes & Ms. Hart

This year, the Creative Writing majors at SOA have continued to cultivate their voices, hone their skills, and garner recognition on the national stage, earning hundreds of awards in some of the country's oldest and most prestigious writing competitions, including a National Young Artist Award from the The National Foundation for the Advancement of Artists. This year the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards recognized our students with 158 Regional Writing Awards (including 36 gold keys) and thirteen National Awards, including a National Scholastic Gold Portfolio and \$12,500 scholarship (one of only eight given nationwide) and two American Voices Medals.

Our program hosted three guest writers this year. SOA alum and New York Times bestselling author Ryan Graudin discussed her childhood journey to becoming a writer. Television and film writer and producer Allison Davis, presented a seminar and workshop on adaptations and writing for the screen, and critically acclaimed literary scholar, Emily Van Duyne, presented her groundbreaking work on the iconic poet Sylvia Plath and led a workshop about cultivating thematic obsessions as artistic touchstones.

The sixth grade began their year with poetry. Each student wrote several imagist poems as they explored the importance of concrete imagery, metaphor, simile, and symbol. They also took part in an ekphrastic poetry unit with sixth-grade Visual Arts majors which involved a day trip to Bulls Island where both artists and writers were inspired by local flora and fauna. In the weeks that followed, students created and traded works of art and poetry based on this immersive lowcountry nature experience, and this unit ended with an art exhibit and poetry reading. In the spring, students were introduced to fiction. They studied Toni Cade Bambara, Kurt Vonnegut, and Pat Conroy, and wrote two short stories and several vignettes, centered around secrets, lies, real human conflict and fiction genres.

Seventh graders focused on fiction during the first semester. They studied plot structure, pacing, conflict, dialogue, point of view, flashback, and characterization within a short story and crafted four extensive pieces that explored these techniques. They also collaborated with visual arts majors following a trip to the International African American Museum. For this project, writers crafted a narrative based on a story or work of art in the museum and artists responded with an accompanying illustration. In the spring, they studied poetry, creating works that employed sensory imagery, allusion, pop culture, and persona. They researched the work of a selected contemporary poet, engaging in critical analysis as well as writing a poem in their chosen poet's style. They sent letters to the poets, conveying what they admired about their work and what they learned through close analysis of it.

Eighth graders began the year studying fiction, particularly the works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Mark Twain, Aaron Sorkin, and Tim O'Brien, and wrote two full-length short stories, centered around



10th & 11th grade Creative Writers read their work at Kudu Coffee downtown.

experience and perspective, narrative voice, folklore, and magical realism, as well as ways in which writers plant their endings early on in a story. In the second half of the year, they studied poetry and experimented with various forms: an epistolary poem, a Golden Shovel, a pantoum, a prose poem, and finally, a sequence poem. They analyzed a wide range of examples and the different ways to approach each of these forms, finding their own avenues of expression and creativity through the restrictions and long traditions that these forms offer.

Ninth graders began the year with Advanced Poetry Workshop, studying a range of canonical and contemporary poets. They wrote poems that employed extended metaphors and drew on inspiration from science and scientific metaphor. They also traveled to the Somerby Retirement community to interview elders and write narrative poems inspired by their stories. In Advanced Fiction Workshop, they studied the works of Louise Erdrich, Ernest Hemingway, Daniel Wallace, Andrea Lee, and Raymond Carver, as well as wrote two short stories and several vignettes, focused on a number of advanced fiction techniques like minimalism, crisis of faith, human prejudice, narrative uncertainty, objective correlative, and the role that storytelling played/plays in human evolution.

Tenth graders learned to craft a script for the stage and a script for the screen, focusing on multi-layered dialogue, text, context and subtext. In the process, they studied the works of August Wilson and Jonathan Safran Foer, and produced a film script and a play script. Producer and showrunner Kevin Biegel ran a writers room workshop to show how television shows are created and produced. In Nonfiction Workshop, students wrote essays exploring their personal flaws and prejudices as well as a braided essay about both a talent and a struggle and an extensive essay about the life of someone they admire.

Eleventh graders studied thematic obsessions, form and style in Finding Your Voice, learning to identify their own voice through a thematic series of poems and lyric essays. Finally, each student wrote an artist's statement in order to solidify their creative achievements and goals. In the Place and Perspective course, eleventh graders took an in-depth look at what role both locus and point of view play in the alchemy of creating a work of literature. Students wrote three linked episodic stories based on a fictional place as well as personal essays and stories about the culture in which they find themselves and some aspect of nature in their unique locale. In addition, students wrote a story from the point of view of a differing gender, culture, or socioeconomic perspective, challenging themselves to see from another viewpoint. Both tenth and eleventh-grade students enjoyed giving a public reading of their work at Kudu coffee house downtown.

The intensive yearlong Senior Thesis course allowed thirteen students to learn the ins and outs of the writing profession. They each worked one-on-one with a renowned writer to write, revise and publish an original 100-page book, now available for purchase at Amazon. The year culminated in a record number of state, regional and national awards and a well-attended Senior Thesis Reading titled A Little Time in a Cocoon.



Kate Largent presenting her Senior Thesis, *Hell or High Water*, the Creative Writing program's first ever musical!

Congratulations to the Creative Writers on Their Senior Theses!

Pictured below is the cover of each senior's book, excerpts of which were read at the Senior Thesis Reading, A Little Time in the Cacoon, on May 7.



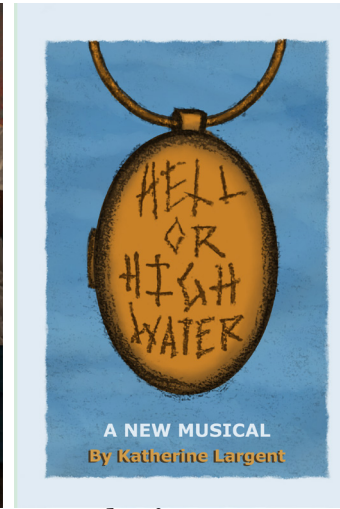
Riley Brockman



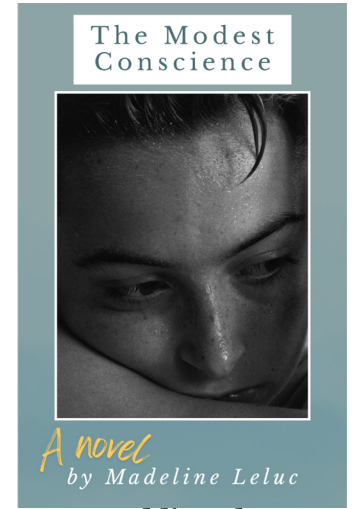
Niamh Carmichael



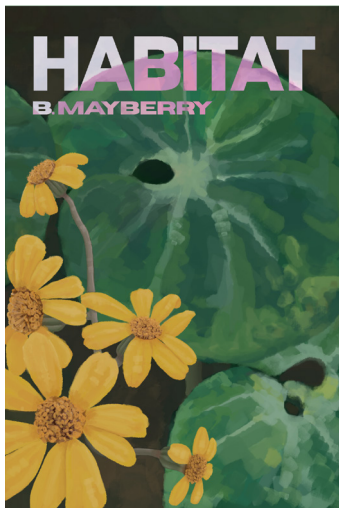
Nora Green



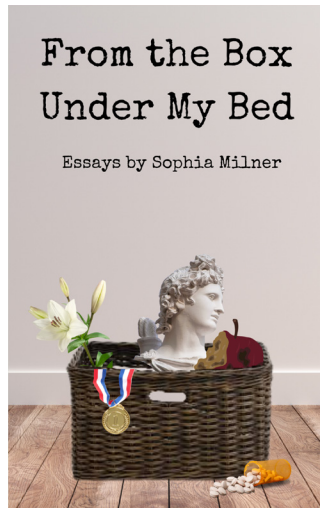
Katherine Largent



Maddie Leluc



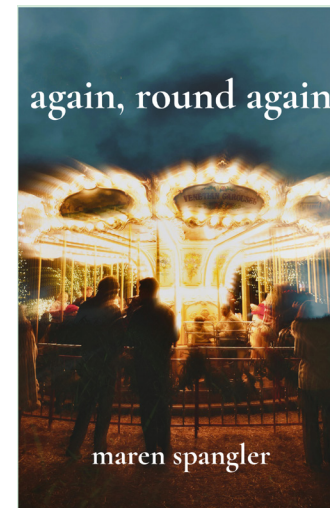
Brooklyn Mayberry



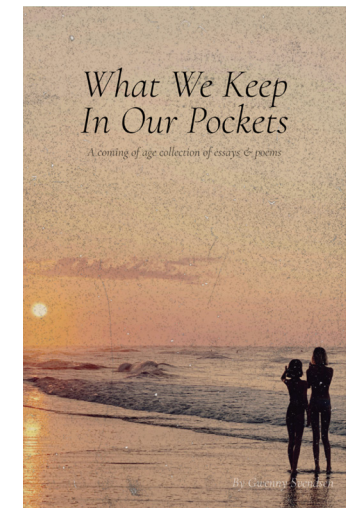
Sophia Milner



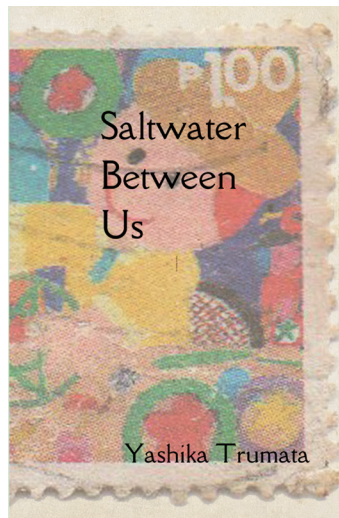
Ava Simancas



Maren Spangler



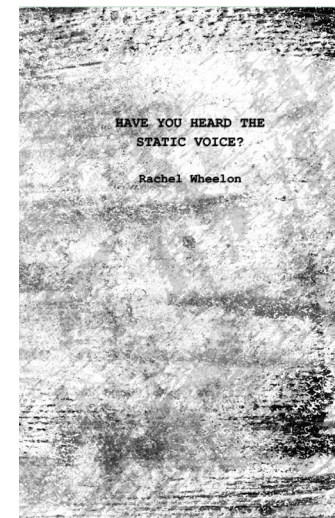
Gwenny Svendsen



Yashika Trumata



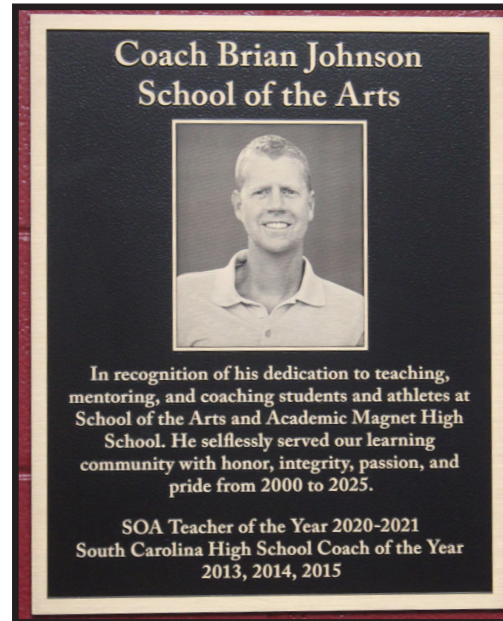
Viktoriya Ustyenko



Rachel Wheelon

SOA Gym Dedicated in Memory of Coach Johnson

On Friday, May 20th, SOA's gym was officially named *The Coach Brian Johnson Gym*, in honor of our former SOA P.E Teacher and AMHS Track and Cross Country coach, who sadly passed away in March 2025. Members of his family, runners from his teams, and school faculty all spoke at the dedication ceremony.



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Middle and High School Bands Had a Very Successful Year!

by Sheridan King and Ms. Alice Aldridge

The SOA MS band students have showcased their growth and dedication through performances each quarter this year. Our 6th grade band students have worked diligently to develop both individual and ensemble skills, with every student participating in a solo and ensemble experience. We are proud to share that every 6th grade ensemble earned a Superior rating at the Solo and Ensemble Festival.

Our 7th and 8th grade bands represented our program with excellence at the SCBDA Concert Performance Assessment, earning Superior with Distinction, the highest honor awarded. They also had the unique opportunity to perform alongside the high school Symphonic Band on the grounds of the iconic Biltmore Estate in Asheville, NC.

We are especially proud to celebrate a student who earned 1st chair alto saxophone in the inaugural Middle School All-State Jazz Band. In addition, 34 students were selected for SCBDA Region Band, and 8 students earned placement in the All-State Band.

We look forward to closing out the year with special performances at our 8th grade graduation ceremony.

This year, SOA Highschool students have done many performances and shown their true musicianship and dedication to the band program. Starting off strong, Jump, Jive, and Wail was a huge hit yet again with this year marking the 25th anniversary!

Later in the year, the wind ensemble was a featured performer at the Music For All National Festival in Indianapolis, IN! While in Indianapolis, 3 students also performed with the Honor Band of America! The Symphonic Band traveled to Asheville, NC, and performed at the Biltmore estate and explored Asheville!

After many auditions, SOA ended up having 60 students in Region Band, 15 students in All State Band, 1 student in the SCBDA Honors Jazz Combo, 1 student in All State Jazz Band, and 1 student performed in the SCBDA Masters Recital Competition! Every ensemble (Wind Ensemble, Symphonic Band, and Jazz Band) earned a Superior with Distinction at CPA and JPA as well!



SOA Jazz Band performing at this year's *Jump Jive and Wail*



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Congrats to Visual Artists on Their Senior Theses!

Pictured below is one piece from each senior's thesis collection, which were presented at the Senior Thesis show in the cafeteria on April 30.



Peyton Adams-Smies



Cameron Hazel



Suzie Nordoff



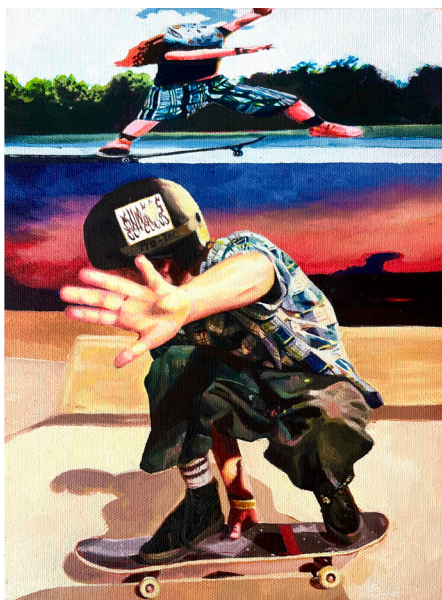
Ella Cutaia



Athan Tawes



Charlotte Whitley



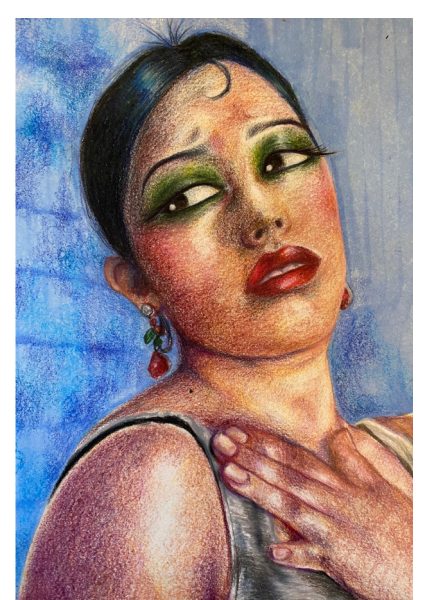
Amelia Counts



Kyra Semler



Whitney Werking



Michelle Barrios-Aguilar



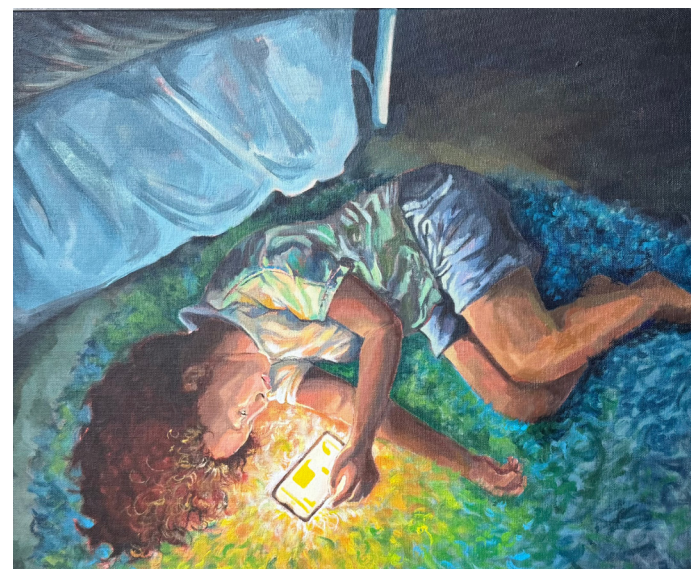
Lillian Zimmerman



Eva Higdon



Via Squires



Pia Oronce



Dani Senecal



Jaidon Richardson



Olive McCoy



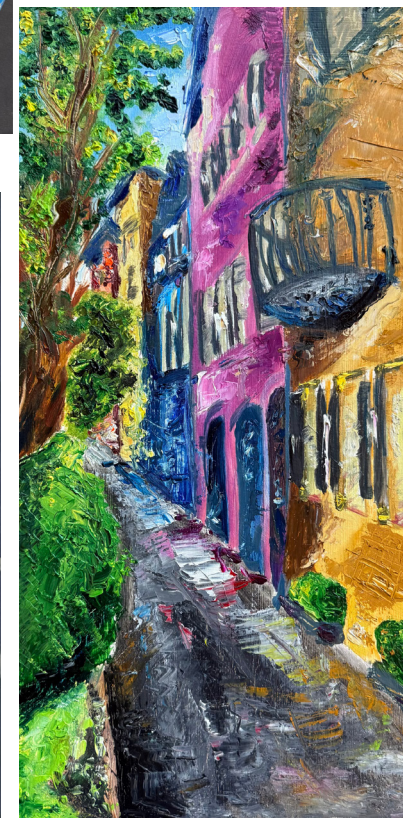
Audra Elm



Josie Meleoney



Elliott Martin



Cesar Ramirez-Pulido



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I look forward to seeing you there!

Christine Bednarczyk

Group Leader

RSVPing is required to be considered for this opportunity

For more information contact me

christine_bednarczyk@charleston.k12.sc.us



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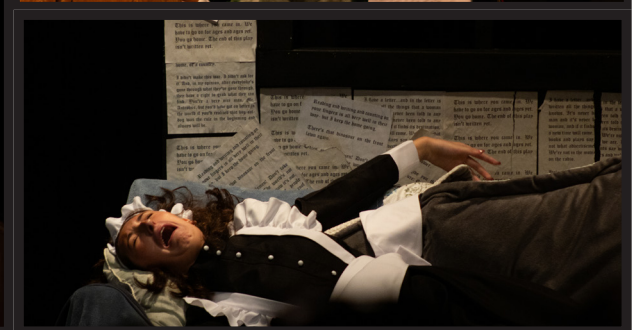


Can't make the meeting?
Opt to get info when you RSVP!

SOA Theater Puts on Four Incredible Shows

photos by Evelyn Gwin

As a part of their respective second semester classes, High school Theater students showcased four different plays, *Bubblehead Cafe*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, and *Dark of the Moon*.



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Seniors Go All Out for Spirit Week

Photos by Luciano Cusatis

Senior Spirit Week was a huge success, with students participating in all five days' themes: Anything But a Backpack Day, Dress Like a Teacher Day, White Lie Day, Dress as Your Younger Self Day, and ending with Decision Day.



***Applause's* Rose Maree Myers Scholarship Awarded to Myles Owens-Walker**



Each year, *Applause* gives the \$1000 *Rose Maree Myers Scholarship for Artistic Excellence* to the senior who most embodies the power and practicality of an arts-integrated education. This year it was awarded to Strings major Myles Owens-Walker, who has been at SOA since sixth grade, and will be attending Florida State University in the fall with a major in Cello Performance.

Junior Haven Hughes Places in State Speech Competition



After advancing to the State Level of the Optimist Club Oratorical Contest, Junior Theater major Haven Hughes took third place, receiving a \$1000 scholarship.

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Seniors Deliver Annual Prank

For this year's Senior Prank, students turned the halls into a beach resort, partying all morning and ending in an intense water balloon fight at lunch!



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SOA Athlete's Finish Strong!

by Fletcher Seminaroti

SOA track athletes finished the season with several strong performances at the state meet. The 4x400-meter relay team, led by junior vocal major **Hadley McAdams**, placed fourth in the state with a time of 4:16.16. **Priya Cardella** earned fourth place in the 400-meter hurdles after running a 1:09.56. **Mackenzie Wilbourn** competed in two events, placing 15th in the 200-meter dash with a time of 27.40 and 10th in the triple jump with a mark of 9.77 meters. In the 3200-meter run freshman **Aldrin Moriarty** finished 11th in 10:38.11.

The SOA boys lacrosse team advanced to the second round of the playoffs after defeating Waccamaw in the opening round. Their season came to an end with a loss to May River in the second round. The team finished the year with a 10-8 overall record. Junior **Fletcher Seminaroti** and sophomore **Gavriel Pekar** were also recognized with All-District honors for their performance during the season.

The SOA girls lacrosse team finished the season with a 9-8 record. The team qualified for the playoffs but was defeated by Phillip Simmons in the first round. Despite the postseason loss, the team completed the year with a winning record.

The SOA boys soccer team advanced in the state playoffs after defeating Phillip Simmons 2-0, and then took down Buford 3-1 to win their second consecutive state championship. **Vadym Stefanyshyn** earned All-Region honors for his play during the season, and **Cesar Ramirez**, who scored two goals in the championship game, was recognized as an All-State selection.

The SOA girls' soccer team followed a similar path, advancing to the state championship after defeating Atlantic Collegiate 4-0 in the playoffs. They beat Andrew Jackson HS in the championship game, making them back-to-back champs as well. Sophomore **Bella Snider** earned All-Region honors for her performance during the season. Sophomore **Bridget Lee** was recognized as an All-State selection.

Raptor baseball finished the season with a 13-11 overall record. The team defeated Mullins in the playoffs to advance to the second round. Their postseason run ended in a close 9-8 loss to Cheraw High School in the ninth inning.

Congratulations to all these incredible athletes!



Cesar will be playing soccer for Converse University next year

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Celebrating SOA's Retiring Faculty

This year, three beloved, longtime members of the SOA faculty are retiring. Our Applause staff interviewed these three to discuss their times at SOA, as well as their futures.

Mr. Ernest White, Social Studies Teacher

Luciano Cusatis: In your time at SOA, what have been some of the most memorable moments?

Ernest White: Lunch-time band performances, students playing the piano in the cafeteria, the pickup football games in the courtyard, all of the convocation shows, and senior cut day.

LC: What have you learned, and in what ways do you feel you have changed as a teacher during your time here?

EW: I learned that there are some very talented artists and performers who have been students at SOA. As a teacher you are always monitoring and adjusting to the students needs to gain success in the area of learning and life.

LC: What do you plan to do in your retirement?

EW: In retirement, I plan to spend more family time, play more golf, enjoy the beach, Invest in the future financially, own a 1977 Trans Am, and enjoy life!

LC: Do you have any advice you'd like to leave with the people of SOA?

EW: I want to say, Thank you for the honor and memories of being part of a great Faculty and Staff and a wonderful school called SOA. Ms. Derrickson and Dr. Cook are "simply the BEST."



Ms. Robin Carter, Science Teacher

Dante Criscitiello: What have been some of the highlights of your time at SOA?

Robin Carter: Sponsoring the mock trial team for 6 years, traveling with students and Karl Clark to England, and to Australia, Fiji, and New Zealand with EF Tours, and field trips to the escape room and CVS

DC: Out of all the classes you've taught, what was your favorite?

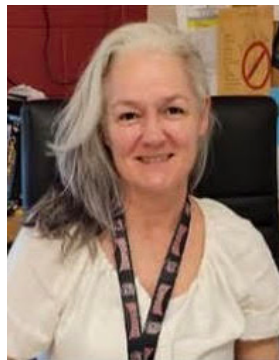
RC: I've taught Physical Science, Biology, Chemistry, Marine Science, and Forensics. My favorite has definitely been forensics.

DC: What was your favorite part about teaching here?

RC: All the good times with my teacher friends at SOA.

DC: How do you plan to spend your retirement?

RC: I'm not too sure, really. I'll take up new hobbies, maybe, and spend time with family



Ms. Sylvia Edwards, Admissions Secretary

Sheridan King: What year did you start at SOA?

Sylvia Edwards: August, 2001

SK: What are a few great memories you have here at SOA?

SE: Seeing so many amazing performances. The vocal and orchestra Holiday Concert is always my favorite. Two years ago, I was able to have my husband come with me. When they sang "Silent Night" and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing signed this, it meant alot to my husband. He has been deaf in one ear since he was a young child. We both got teary eyed when they did this.

SK: How do you plan to use your time in your retirement? Any fun hobbies?

SE: Luckily, I am going to be able to return to SOA part time. I will work half days, Monday through Friday. As far as hobbies go, my favorite thing to do right now is make chunky handknit blankets. I have probably made about 30 over the last two years. It is so much fun, but so meaningful when I can give them to people I love.

SK: Do you have any fun plans for this summer?

SE: Every summer, my family of fifteen go on a vacation together. Last year we went on a cruise and celebrated my husband's seventieth birthday. This year we are going to Orlando and staying in a large amazing VRBO with a pool and gameroom.

SK: Where did you work before coming to SOA?

SE: I taught 4K and one year of 5K at two different church schools. I then worked as a Piggly Wiggly florist for 4 years before starting here at SOA.

SK: I know you did a lot of different things here, how would you describe what you did at SOA?

SE: My main job is the application and audition process. I do a lot of other tasks that are asked of me. I love being able to design things in Canva for the school. One thing I recently designed was the Blue Ribbon School magnet. I am also known as the *Mail Merge Queen*. I have been able to use the technology I have learned or taught myself over the years here at SOA. I have been able to teach other classified staff several programs to help make their job easier.



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Applause Presents SOA's Class of 2026 in Their Own words...

In celebration of their senior year, Applause asked the graduating class of 2026 to reflect on their time at SOA through a short essay responding to one of the following prompts: What would you do differently if you were entering sixth grade again? What do you hope to be doing in 2036? Which teacher or class impacted you the most? Reflect on any aspect of your years at SOA. Reflect on the value of an SOA education.

Annika Baran

I am so grateful that I came to SOA in ninth grade because I met my people and got to share so many wild and entertaining experiences with them. I remember sitting on the cement wall outside the cafeteria with Shelby and Jordyn during the first few lunches of freshman year because we had met at new student orientation and didn't really know anybody else. Eventually, we started sitting with the rest of the freshman theatre majors in the cafeteria until one day I suggested we eat outside, and after that it became a tradition. Every day we ate outside, and if it was raining, we would just sit under the balcony. I think we suffered through the heat and the cold because it made us feel like we had earned "our table" when the weather was beautiful and everyone else wanted to eat outside too. Senior thesis was also such a unique experience that I'm incredibly grateful for. Writing my own ten-minute play while being directed by my classmates was both challenging and rewarding in a way that no one outside of SOA Theatre thesis could really understand. It forced all of us to get over each other because the work mattered so much to everyone involved. Looking back, it's one of my favorite things I've done at SOA and something I never could have experienced at another high school.



Michelle Barrios Aguilar

Imagining 2036 is difficult because I would only want the best for myself, especially after high school. I would like to imagine that I've done the best with what I've had and at least figured out life and what I want from it. I tend to be someone who can't fully grasp what they want to do or what lies ahead of them. Many students at least have a vision of what they want to become and do, but for what it's worth, I don't have a very big broad idea of what I would become.

So, to keep it simple I'd like to not struggle with financial issues and hopefully be helping the world out. Maybe even keep doing what I first loved, art, even if my will to continue can sometimes feel complicated. I would love to look back at my younger self in ten years and reflect on my mistakes, realizing that



I've grown from them as not only a daughter and sister, but also as a friend.

In the long run, things will get rocky and ugly because life is life, and I can't stop it from beating me down once or twice, but I hope to at least get through it. To be fair with myself I want to say, I would love to be doing what I love and have met more people who truly would care to have me in their lives. I don't have very big wishes, but if I had to wish for anything, it would be to look at my life and realize I finally got what I always wanted: peace, love, and happiness, whether that be financially, emotionally, or physically. I just hope life by then has treated me better than before.

Bryce Beasley

If I could relive any moment at SOA, it would definitely be the theater trip to London. Honestly, half the trip was kind of a disaster. We had a horrible tour guide, the food was terrible, most of us got sick, and I had to sit through the absolute train wreck that was the *Miss Doubtfire* musical. I still laugh thinking about me, Gavin, and Milo ripping apart every part of the show afterward. But even with all of that, it ended up being one of my favorite memories from high school. London is one of the coolest cities I've ever been to, and getting to experience it with my friends made it way better. I'll never forget climbing on top of an abandoned church tower with Andrew, Lily, and Marin or just wandering around the city together. As cheesy as it sounds, the best part of the trip wasn't all the things we did, but the people I shared it with. I know it's cliché, but I think it's something you start to realize as you get older, how much of a gift it is just to be around other people and share a laugh with them. I know I'll always remember all of our inside jokes, the random many trips to Five Guys, and the absolutely brutal walk up what felt like a million stairs at Saint Paul's Cathedral. Looking back now, how can I ever forget any of those memories? Through this trip, I learned that to live life is to make memories you'd want to tell your kids about.



Riley Brockman

I have attended SOA since the sixth grade. I've grown up surrounded by the most talented artists, singers, writers, dancers, musicians, and designers I could ever imagine. One thing I've noticed during my time here is the community we've all created together. Students compliment each other after successful convocations; they show up to after school performances; they read (even if begrudgingly) through their friends' *Icarus* pieces, they search through the *Applause* for their peer's artwork. One of my best friends transferred schools after middle school, and I listened to her talk about how distant people felt, how isolating school could be, how little community swelled at her school gates. That is something I've never had to worry about. SOA reminds me of *Armillaria ostoyae*, a fungus that stretches 3.7 miles in Oregon. Its roots connect millions of mushrooms to a single network. We are all artists. Sure, I in theory have little in common with a visual artist, but when I spend the time to dig deeper, I realize how similar we are. SOA's education has taught me the value of exploring all forms of art, regardless of my interests, because they are all connected, one massive system of creativity full of passionate people.



Kennedy Colie

Being a student at SOA is such an honor and a privilege. I am so thankful for all the opportunities, resources, and experiences this school has provided. I am so thankful for my friends who helped me realize that being myself and going with the flow is 100% the best way to live my life. Every step of the way, I have learned something new here. In sixth grade, I had no idea what was ahead of me. Especially after the pandemic hit, I had no clue what direction my life would take. I would sit around wondering what the future me would be like, and I don't think I would've had an answer, had you asked me in seventh grade. Challenging high school classes in middle school definitely built character, and I wonder what I would be like today if I hadn't been pushed beyond what I thought was my potential. The beginning of high school is when I realized that the impossible endeavors were possible if I put my mind to it, and I started thinking of myself as intelligent instead of lacking luster. Maybe it was the absence of the demeaning personalities of middle school math prodigies, but it was probably just me growing up, too. SOA taught me that I can achieve everything I want to achieve, no matter who believes in me. SOA taught me the importance of consistency and productivity. SOA taught me to be kind to myself and others, and to help those around me and to know when I need help. SOA has given me many life lessons, and I will forever be grateful for my time here.



MK Colvin

In 2036, I hope to be out of vet school and helping animals, except I don't want to be your regular small-animal vet. I want to work with exotic animals. In college, I hope to travel and work with various species all around the globe. I don't know yet if I want to stay in the States or go abroad, maybe I'll work at a zoo or conduct research overseas. I know my path in this world is to help others, and I'm trusting God to lead me in the way that He wants me to go.



Amelia Counts

SOA has guided me to become the person I am today artistically and individually. When I first came to SOA I was eager to prove myself; the talent that filled the school was overwhelming. While watching the band perform at my first convocation, I turned to my day one, Lila Elm, and said, "Wow they should really play at America's Got Talent!" Looking back, the 6th grade band might not have made the cut, but as we've grown over the past seven years we have really grown into an amazing group of creatives. One of the things I value most about SOA is its community. I truly don't think I would have thrived anywhere else, because the environment at this school is unlike any other. Everyone here has a deep passion for their craft and that shared dedication fosters a culture of kindness and respect. I have received an overwhelming amount of support during my time at this school as I have grown as an artist. My classmates, along with my wonderful teachers, Ms. Rich and Mr. Colie, have encouraged



and inspired me to become the artist I am. I have been given so many incredible opportunities to share my art with the world, from countless art competitions and commissioned pieces to projects for the city and beautiful art exhibitions. None of this could have been possible for me without my art teachers, who have invested and believed in my talent since middle school. Their encouragement and guidance have shaped both my confidence and my growth as an artist. I truly believe that SOA has paved a bright future for me and all of my artistic endeavors. Because of this school and its supportive community, I feel confident that I will be able to achieve all of my dreams. I am beyond grateful to have had the privilege of attending SOA and I will miss this school more than words can express. Thank you, SOA.

Luciano Cusatis

If I were to enter SOA as a sixth grader again, I think I would try to do everything with a little more care. When I started out at SOA, I mostly did what I needed to get by in my classes without really giving it my all. I think a big part of this was due to COVID, as spending the first three quarters of seventh grade online made it way too easy to ignore assignments or do them late. Additionally, not being physically in Strings made cello feel like less of a priority to me. This mindset carried on far too long into high school, but I think during my junior year, and definitely this year, it changed.

I'm certainly not saying I'm a scholar now, but my relationship with both my major and my academic subjects has definitely improved. In ninth grade, when many of my friends in strings were placed into Symphony Orchestra and I wasn't, I began to realize that I had fallen behind and I couldn't get away with just coasting through school anymore. With that motivation now present, I was able to make it into Symphony in tenth grade, and then Sinfonetta, the highest level, the following year. Over time, a similar effect occurred with my academics. Specific classes played into this, namely AP Chem last year and AP Calc this year, come to mind as key examples. They were classes where I felt genuinely interested to learn more, and the work stopped feeling like a burden and more like a way to better understand the subject. I noticed that not only did my grades improve, but school in general felt like more of a positive experience.

If I had approached school as a sixth grader the way I do now, things would have gone a whole lot differently. However, I have no desire to do that. I'm very happy with the place I am at today, and even the parts I don't look back on fondly have taught me a lot and made me the person I am.

Ella Cutaia

I've attended SOA as a Visual Arts major since sixth grade. At the end of seventh grade, I was so burnt out and wanted nothing more than to leave SOA because I hated my major. That changed come eighth grade with the arrival of Visual Arts teacher Ms. Richardson, who changed my life. I quickly became obsessed with art class. I was looking forward to going to school every day. I made the best friendships in her class, and she continues to give me so many amazing opportunities. Without her, I don't think I would be who I am today. I wouldn't be at SOA if she hadn't become my teacher. I am going to Western Carolina to study art education because of her. She has influenced me so much that I want to be an art teacher and impact people's lives so greatly, the way she impacted mine.



Madison Deaton

Ever since I began attending SOA in eighth grade, I've had people tell me I would never find anywhere like it. As I reflect on my years here, I now know that to be true. At SOA, I've found a community of people who aren't just like me, but people who challenge me to be better in every aspect of my life. I have kindhearted friends to laugh with at lunch and genuine teachers who want me to succeed. The first time I was on stage at school was for convocation. I remember being so amazed by all of my talented peers and the audience that excited the atmosphere. Later, vocal held musical productions and concerts such as *The Sound of Music*, in which I had my first lead role and solo in school. I learned a lot from that experience, including the fact that I was impacting those around me. This year, I've become aware of people who look up to me, like some of the younger vocal students. I'd never thought of myself as someone to look up to, but knowing this has made my determination more powerful. I know that I will always look back on what I did in high school and know that it was worthwhile, and I'll never experience anything like being at SOA.



Reilly Dukes

Reflecting on my time at SOA is hard, not only because of the ups and downs, but also because it is coming to an end. Devoting seven years of my life to this school has led me to not know much else outside of it. I have been fortunate enough to call this community my home, and I know I'm ready to leave its warmth, yet it is daunting to see what lies ahead. SOA has prepared me for every possible scenario, yet it seems it has not prepared me for the hardest part: graduation. If you have known me since freshman year, it's common knowledge I've been ready to graduate and move on with my life, yet when it's finally coming to fruition, I find myself hesitant, uneasy, and nervous. But these emotions, this sense of anxiety, have propelled and will continue to drive me towards success and fulfillment. The values that have been instilled, the brain that has been nurtured, and the love that has been cultivated will be my backbone as I move forward into the future, never forgetting the foundation that built me. As I continue to grow at Roosevelt University, pursuing my passion for acting and further discovering who I am both as an artist and as a person, I will carry the lessons and memories formed at SOA with me. Though this chapter is ending, its impact on me never will. SOA has shaped not only my education, but also my character, ambition, and resilience, and for that, I am eternally grateful.



Audra Elm

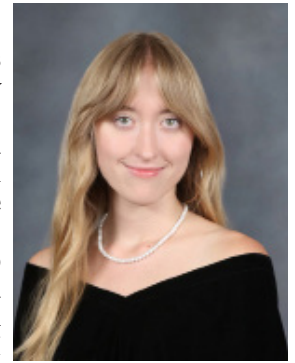
In August, I'll be moving to Nashville, Tennessee to study Songwriting and Music Business at Belmont University. While I'm not certain Nashville will be my final destination, I feel like it is a strong starting point to get my feet off the ground in the music industry. Music is what I'd like to spend my entire life doing, and thus certainly what I see myself focusing on in ten years. By then, I intend to have released all of the music I have written to this point in my life, and I plan to continue to write, record, and release even more. I don't know where I'll be genre wise in 2036. I have, for a few years now, felt a deep resonance with folk and country music. They're the genres that I feel I've most found my voice through, but that is always subject to

change. Different sounds have spoken to me at different points in my life. I think it's the unpredictable nature of creation, really in all forms, that keeps me coming back to it always. I certainly intend to continue to make visual art, as well. I'd like to become more versed in photography and sculpture, and to keep up making oil paintings. By then I hope to find a space for both music and visual arts in my day to day. I need them both in my life because they balance each other out. Maybe I can take some notes from Joni Mitchell.

In addition to making music, I plan to continue to gig relentlessly. My ideal future would be one where I make a sustainable income from performing. An income large enough to travel as I please, another thing I have many different dreams of, and maybe to buy an old Pontiac Firebird.

Lila Elm

In 2036 I plan to be living in a big city and playing in a successful band and/or running my own business within the music industry. I have been pursuing my love for music so far, and as I go on to college I plan to continue working hard and following this passion on an even bigger scale. Through academic classes, Orchestra, Jazz Band, and the incredible friends I have made, SOA has given me so many opportunities that have helped me become stronger and more confident as both a musician and an individual. I will use what I have already learned to guide me through my next endeavors, and I feel so lucky that I was able to attend a school that prepared me so well for what lies ahead. Moving forward, I already have plans to work with some friends at Basement Tape Records, an independent record label, as soon as I get to Belmont, and being in Nashville will help me connect with people in the music industry so that I can find my place within it. Whether it be through music, art, or otherwise, I can't wait to meet even more people, discover new things that I am passionate about, and take music even further over this next decade.



Micaiah Fagan

Through the handful of teachers I've had a SOA, the one who stands out to me the most and had the strongest impact on me is Mr. Martin. He helped me find my love for not only English, but also myself and encouraged me to keep going no matter how hard something was. I believe that a teacher is what makes a class, not the subject. I have had the privilege of being taught by Mr. Martin from the beginning of high school to the end, and it was a very life changing experience. Mr. Martin makes sure that every one of his students feel seen whether that's through "Student of the Week" awards, "Wall of Fame," or just simply shouting them out on his class Instagram. He makes it his mission to support students at after school events and makes sure they feel nothing short of seen. Without Mr. Martin's guidance I'm not completely sure who I would be today. He has and continues to show up for his students in ways that not all teachers will and that is what makes him exceptional and memorable. Thank you Mr. Martin, for all your hard work, kind words, and dedication. You will stay in my heart and many other students' hearts forever.



Madison Fletcher

Walking into SOA for band camp freshman year, I knew no one. I sat down in a chair, staring at the floor when two girls suddenly walked up to me and started making conversation. Nervously, I began responding to their questions, eventually mustering up a few of my own. These girls, Addie Szymkowicz and Madeline Church, became two of my biggest role models, inspiring me to grow socially, academically, and artistically over the past four years. Having someone to answer my stupid questions without judgment deeply inspired me to hold the same role in the lives of others. Whether talking to someone your own age or a few years younger than you, treating others with kindness, respect, and acceptance can drastically change the trajectory of their life. Without anyone to show me the ropes, I would be half of the person I am today. Madeline's academic excellence and Addie's free spirit both manifested within me, rounding out my personality and my ideas. They taught me that you should always enjoy the present, but you must simultaneously plan for your future. My time at SOA has been invaluable; there will never be a place that fosters the same amount of growth and artistic excellence as the School of the Arts. Closing with the words of Emily Dickinson, "that it will never come again is what makes life so sweet."



Jordyn Goodman

It's been such a joy and a privilege to go to this school for these past four years. Especially getting to learn and perform with all the talented and driven people in my theater class. All of my favorite memories have been with my theater class. Each show comes with its own inside jokes and special moments. When we performed Shakespeare's *As You Like It* in junior year, we made so many amazing memories. There was one time when we were performing and my scene partner, Bryce, fumbled over his lines and ended up saying something really stupid. It took all the strength in my body not to laugh at him. So, there we were on stage, staring at each other, trying desperately to not break. Eventually we made it through the scene and exited the stage, however someone tripped on my cape, and I practically rolled off. This unfortunate series of events led to all of us busting out laughing backstage. Performances are fun, but some of the best memories are made during rehearsal. When we did Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* as our competition show in sophomore year, we each played a whole lot of characters because it was such a small class. During one of our rehearsals, Mr. Younts splayed out the mats, stood on a box, and told us to walk in a circle. Very confused, all of us started walking; then Mr. Younts told us to walk like trolls...so we did. Except Mr. Younts wasn't happy and told us to get on all fours...so we did. This back and forth of us doing what Mr. Younts said and his telling us to do more went on for what felt like forever, but I'm pretty sure it was only an hour. Shelby and I can now pull out near perfect troll impressions at the drop of a hat, and we still laugh about it.



Nathaniel Green

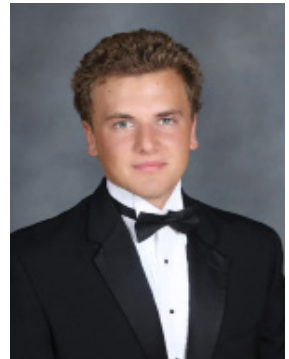
In 2036, I see myself fully living the life I've been working toward—performing, creating, and inspiring others through the arts. My journey begins over the next four years at Point Park University, where I plan to major in

dance. I also plan to minor in physical therapy so I can better understand my body, prevent injuries, and help others do the same. This will also allow me to teach while I pursue my dreams, giving me both experience and a steady source of income. During that time, I want to soak up every opportunity possible, not only training intensely in dance but also expanding my skills in singing and acting. My goal is to become a true triple threat. After I graduate from college, I plan to move to New York City, where I'll be at the center of the entertainment industry. I know it won't be easy, but I am ready to work my butt off to be a star. I will take classes, go to auditions constantly, and push myself to improve every single day. No matter how many rejections I face, I will stay focused and keep going. By 2036, I want to have performed in a movie, danced with a professional company or toured with major artists, and made a name for myself in multiple areas of performance. I also see myself stepping into other creative spaces—being featured on the cover of a magazine, walking in a fashion show, and acting in a television series. I know these dreams require discipline, resilience, and confidence, but I am ready to put in the work. With passion, dedication, and most of all, putting my trust in God, I believe I can turn these goals into reality and build a career that reflects everything I love about performing.



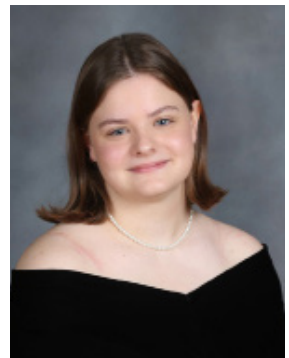
Paul Harlos

Having attended SOA for seven years, I have always felt I was someone on the outside looking in. I became desensitized to the talent, felt like I was underperforming in my major, and I was envious of my peers that attended "normal" schools and the experiences I thought I was missing. Friday night lights, pep rallies, school sports, all seemed out of reach. Seven years later, my perspective has shifted. I believe my time as a student at SOA has groomed me into the person I am today, and I'm glad to say it is a person I can be proud of. Apart from the strong academics that have got me into college, and my major classes that made me into a better piano player than I ever thought I would become, I think it is the environment that has affected me the most. I have yet to experience the supportiveness, kindness, and passion campus wide at any other high school environment I have been exposed to. The people I am surrounded by amaze me everyday, and continue to inspire me to pursue greatness.



Ayla Hollar

The teacher who had the strongest impact on me was Mr. McCauley, who taught me AP World History. I had always been interested in history, but Mr. Mac's class opened an entirely new world to me, with new ideas and concepts to explore. It's hard to fully describe the impact that he had on me in just a few words, because in truth he changed the course of my life. Because of Mr. Mac, I felt like I could fully embrace my love for history, and it helped to see him act so passionately about a subject. It was truly inspiring, and seeing that from my teacher pushed me to become a better student entirely. His lectures would engage me from the very beginning, and he always kept things interesting. I have a particular memory of him giving a Halloween



themed lesson on medieval torture, which might sound gross (and it was), but it was fun to unwind from the regularly scheduled lesson and get to learn something new. To see a teacher care so much about his students as well as the material he taught is so important for a student, and I feel incredibly lucky that I was able to experience this with Mr. Mac. As a senior, I ended up taking his AP Psych class simply because of the experience I had in AP World. Additionally, I have elected to study History in college and explore a history related career, all thanks to the encouragement Mr. Mac has given me over the years. Thank you, Mr. McCauley!

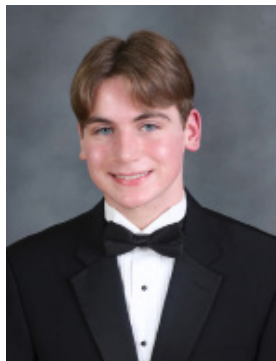
Sasha Kagan

In 2036, I want my life to be completely flipped from what it is right now. Instead of living by the coast, I want to live in a huge city. I hope to wake up every morning and find new experiences in my day and live my life to the fullest. I plan to be in residency training to be a doctor, and have just graduated from med school. I can see myself walking down the streets of this city with people I love, as it's turning dark outside. City night lights are one of my favorite sights to see, and in ten years, I hope it's something I see every night.



Michael Kardell

I had the opportunity to take classes with Ms. Godwin for two consecutive years, both for Honors and AP Chemistry. Chemistry is a subject that I never expected I would enjoy. It was always considered one of the more scary and difficult sciences to take, so coming into sophomore year, I was prepared for the worst. By a surprising contrast, I found myself extremely interested in the subject, so much so that I voluntarily chose to take it for a second year. This is almost entirely due to Ms. Godwin's passion for teaching the class. Ms. Godwin will push you to do your best and will not sugarcoat anything about it, but she will always be your biggest supporter. Without this support, I would have never realized my passion for chemistry, let alone decide to major in it at college. AP Chemistry was also the most unique class that I have taken at SOA. With only fourteen students, our class became more of a community. The content was very difficult, but we all had each other to rely on for help, and everybody was willing to help one another. I am very grateful for all of the teachers, classes, and opportunities that I have enjoyed at SOA, but Ms. Godwin's classroom will hold a special sentiment for me as I continue on to college.



Nicholas King

An SOA education is invaluable. Being provided with an atmosphere that allows you to fully immerse yourself in doing what you love is astounding, and if it wasn't for SOA I think my future would look entirely different. I wouldn't have the skills and confidence to pursue theatre, wouldn't be as proud of who I am, and wouldn't have several friendships that are more valuable than anything. To me, SOA has become such a pillar in my life.

However, SOA has also prepared me to step forward into my future and out of my comfort zone. Ironically, I've always joked about how hard



it would be to imagine my life if I wasn't a theatre major. But I genuinely couldn't imagine my life being any different. Something SOA has instilled in me, in the best way, is defiance. When auditioning, people told me I wouldn't get in. And since then, I've spent seven years not only proving people wrong, but also proving to myself that no matter the circumstance, with the right amount of determination you can achieve anything.

While I'll miss my time at SOA and be ecstatic to return for visits, I am beyond eager to put everything I've learned at SOA to the test as I head off to college. I once wanted so badly to go to SOA, and since then my ambitions have only skyrocketed. As I prepare to move to New York City and attend my dream school in pursuit of theatre, I'm endlessly grateful for SOA and have gained more wisdom and passion from it than I can begin to place a value on.

Katherine Largent

From the beginning of my seven years at SOA, I anticipated my senior thesis with equal amounts of eagerness and dread. Though I had always loved to write, publishing a full-length book felt like more than I could handle. But, over the years, the prospect gradually became less daunting—partially because of practice, and partially because of the classroom environment. We learned early on how to give and take constructive criticism, how to lift each other up, how to help each other become the best versions of ourselves. In creative writing, being vulnerable was always safe.

That safety is the only thing that could have given me the confidence I needed to do what I did next. For context, I have always loved musical theatre, but I never got to do much of anything musical in creative writing. However, since thesis was a more self-directed project, this could be my chance. I went to Mr. Hammes with my idea: our program's first musical.

I couldn't have created my thesis without the help of my classmates and teachers. My classmates gave me their feedback and supported me at every turn. Mr. Hammes helped me work through problems and plot holes. By the time I had finished the script, it was molded by a dozen other pairs of hands, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

For my thesis performance, I worked with students from grades eight to twelve, across four majors. They brought my characters to life with talent and dedication. When the five of us sang together, I knew we'd created something special, and that feeling was only confirmed when we heard the applause on the night of my thesis performance. SOA has created a community of multitalented artists, and together, we are nothing short of magical.

Addison Lawrence

I came to SOA in my freshman year, and I was nervous because it was an adjustment. However, as soon as I walked onto campus, everyone was so welcoming. SOA is such a great community and every class has a different atmosphere to help you learn. SOA has encouraged me to grow both academically and creatively. Being a fashion major has been so rewarding because each year I put in so much work, and by the end of the year around the time of the Fashion Show, I feel so proud of myself that I did it. I am shocked that I got through four Fashion Shows, but I would do it again due to the abundance of encouragement I received from the SOA community.



Madeline Leluc

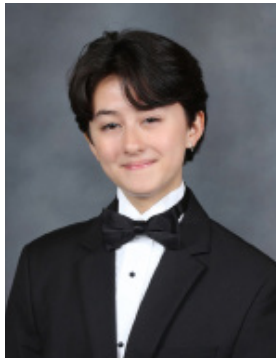
When I arrived at SOA in tenth grade, it was the third school I had attended in three years. Entering the creative writing program and reading the amazing work of my peers, I felt immensely out of place. I had very little experience with writing, while almost everyone I knew within my major had been there since middle school. In my years at SOA, I have tried to use the talent I see every day in my classmates as motivation to be better. I can proudly say that I have done and tried a lot in high school. I modeled in the fashion show every year (and fell face-first on the runway); I competed in Poetry Out Loud (and forgot my second poem mid-speech); I proposed to my friend during convocation; and I rapped/sang in both *Viva La Vida* and *All You Need Is Love* despite having no performance experience. I made it a priority to use high school as an experience to try and fail constantly. With this mindset, I have learned the importance of being intentional in the things I do. In my sophomore year, I thought I could do every event and each performance and take twenty classes all at the same time. And while I did complete each task, I know I didn't do them all to the best of my ability. Like every other high school student, I have shown up to class half-asleep and daydreamed through the lecture, but nothing has been more rewarding than being present and active in my learning. My three years at SOA have been a short time of learning to find community and my place in the world.



Anna Lesher

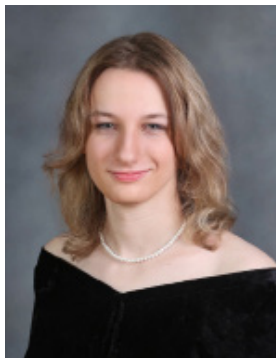
I wish I hadn't taken myself so seriously. There was a lot of pressure to be something, do something with my life, mean something to the people around me. I think I needed to give myself a little more grace. It's not so easy going through your first transitional stage of life, and I felt so... estranged. In many ways, it's easier to become something for others than something for yourself when you don't know what you want. I spent so long chasing after the approval of others, as many of us do, but I needed to learn how to feel that love for myself. Obviously, it's a lot easier said than done, and finding that balance between self esteem and pride is unique to each person, but I wish I realized that's what I needed.

I'm glad I found it when I did, though. Of course I wish I'd found peace sooner, but maybe that's just the way my life was meant to go. Do I hate the worst moments of my life? Of course. But it is what it is, and I'm glad everything turned out alright. So maybe I wouldn't do anything differently. Maybe I'd just let things run their course.



Abigal Manley

The teacher who has had the most impact on me during my time at SOA is Mr. Martin. Mr. Martin is kind, caring, and passionate about everything that he teaches. His class made me feel welcome to be who I am, but also taught me a lot. Normally, I don't like English classes, but I looked forward to his English class every day. He reignited my passion for reading. He delves deep into the topics while also making it personal for each student, and shows



a degree of passion for English that I have not seen before. But not only is he an amazing teacher, he is also an amazing person, who genuinely cares about each student and is someone you can talk to about anything. I was able to take English 1 and English 4 Honors with him, and I feel so lucky to have had the opportunities to do so. He is a genuine joy to be taught by, and everyone who has a chance to take a class with him should. He is the best teacher I have ever had, and his class has changed my life both academically and personally.

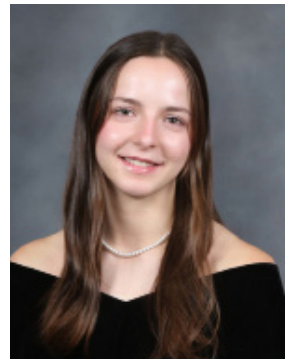
Josephine Meloeny

In ten years, I see myself living abroad—maybe in Italy or Denmark—somewhere that allows me to stay closely connected to nature. I can't imagine building a life in a large city long-term. I would much rather be somewhere that allows me to fully observe and be completely present. Ideally, I'd live somewhere that doesn't force me to choose between landscapes—where I could begin my day in the mountains and end it by the water.

More than a specific location, what matters to me is the environment I create. I want nature to be a solid constant in my daily life, not something I have to seek out. I also want to be part of a strong, supportive community—one where people are connected not just to each other, but to the place they live.

While I'm still exploring what that looks like professionally, I know I want my work to exist at the intersection of sustainability and design. Whether through architecture or another creative field, I want to contribute to something that benefits the environment while allowing for artistic expression.

To make this happen, I plan to continue developing my skills in art and design, pursue an education that supports sustainable practices, and seek out more opportunities to study or work abroad. This path won't be perfect and straightforward, but I am ready to adapt and take risks to build this life.



Shelby Miller

By 2036, I see myself performing on *Saturday Night Live* or at The Second City because comedy is genuinely the thing I care most about and want to spend my life doing. Going to DePaul University for Comedy Arts is a huge part of that goal because it's giving me the chance to learn, grow, and be surrounded by creative people who love comedy as much as I do. I know getting into comedy professionally is hard and takes a lot of work, but I'm willing to put in the time writing, performing, and improving until I get there. I've always loved making people laugh, and I can honestly see myself building a career out of it. Even if the path is unpredictable, I know I want my future to involve performing, creating, and making people forget about life for a little while and just laugh.



Rex Mincey

I went into my freshman year of high school in 2022 as an insecure fourteen-year-old. So, Steve Lacy and Mitski went triple platinum in my headphones. Everyone, including me, was obsessed with stars and cats, everyone and their mom was listening to Odetari. Life was peak, for a little

while. As more exams started to pass, and as friends started to fade, I had to choose between appreciating the only person who was with me when the lights were off or hating myself. I chose me. But it was hard. All of my life, I've struggled with validation. I struggled with wanting other people to accept me before I had fully accepted myself. I fought with myself a lot; there was a war in my brain constantly. Now, as a senior and a seasoned eighteen-year-old unctie, I'm unsubscribing to the notion that you have to be validated by other people in order to love yourself. The menacing glares from old friends and giggles from large groups of boys who joke all the time about their friend having a "crush" on you are temporary, even if it feels like a year's worth of taunting and second-guessing if you smell bad. It'll end as quickly as it started. Letting go of people's opinions about you is the equivalent to an angel gaining its wings. Does this mean to be unaware of your effect on people? No! Of course not. It's more of a reminder that you don't owe anyone perfection. You owe it to yourself to be human, make mistakes, and learn from them. Be ugly, have a glow up, try new food, and gain a couple pounds. In the end, the only person you're gonna have is you. High school has given me the privilege to fall in love with life again. I hope it does the same for you. The only way out is through.

Sara Mojica Supelano

In 2036, I'll be living in my mansion, living my best life. By that time I'll have the option to retire but I'll work three hours of my day and then dedicate my time to baking, sewing, taking care of my little chickens, going for a swim in my pool, and relaxing in my jacuzzi. My house will be hosting most of the family gatherings. I'll travel to new places every now and then, and I'll spend my summers in a different country every year. I won't have kids at that age but maybe in the future. I intend on owning multiple clothing stores, and I'll have a modeling agency. I'm going to host fashion shows, too.

Mathis Morse

I have spent seven long years at SOA, and I don't really have much to reflect on so soon after it all happened. I imagine that I will start to understand what SOA has done for me in a few years, maybe after college while writing my memoir *The Best Playwright in the World*, I mean look at my *Tonys*. In my memoir I'm sure I'll share a few stand out moments from my time at SOA like learning when to use italics vs quotation marks when punctuating titles in Dr. Cusatis's AP Lit class (use italics when it is a standalone work). In my best selling memoir I'll talk about my experience as a sixth grader, and that if I had to do it all over again I would try to be more accepting of critiques, not just assume I do everything perfectly. In my Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir, I think it will be clear that the only reason I have made it to where I am is SOA.



Suzie Nordoff

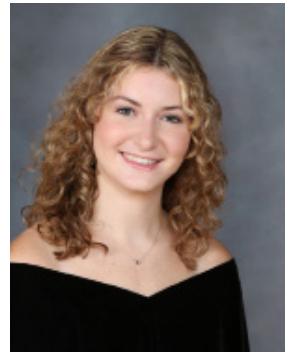
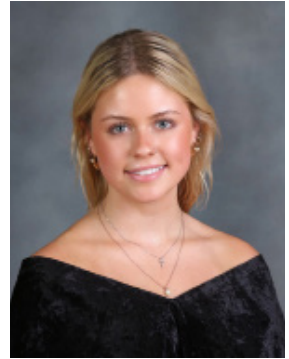
SOA has made such an impact on me. Throughout my time here, I went through many different stages of myself, and know I will continue evolving after I graduate. From ninth grade to twelfth, I learned so much both academically and personally. I met many incredible people, who influenced me and taught me valuable lessons. I discovered what challenges me, and learned how to work with those obstacles. I've also been fortunate to have had the same circle of friends and best friend by my side since I first came here, and they mean so much to me. I am still navigating my sense of self and continue to discover new hobbies, interests, and forms of self-expression. My journey at SOA helped shape who I am today and prepared me for who I am still becoming. I am so grateful for the high school experience I had here, and I will always look back on it fondly.

Emma Norton

An SOA education is one that pushes you to discover your limits, bringing you places you never thought you'd go. My time at SOA has led to personal discovery and growth, but before this came a push to try things I'd never done before or thought I could do, whether it was trying out for a solo, joining a club, or interning in a classroom. One of the most valuable lessons I've learned at SOA is that in order to expand my comfort zone, I have to step outside of it. This is much easier said than done, but in an environment like SOA, which values expression and boldness, students can become empathetic risk takers and leaders, even when faced with setbacks and failure. I have experienced firsthand how the blend of academics and arts at SOA fosters students who are both emotionally and intellectually intelligent. Students are encouraged to develop and explore creatively while also being challenged and stimulated academically. Though I cannot place a price on all that I have learned, the community I've gained is what I cherish the most. When I first started at SOA in the sixth grade, I immediately felt a sense of belonging in being surrounded by other students with an affinity for learning and the arts. Since then, we've all bonded, learned, and grown together. Growing up and connecting with my classmates has been the greatest gift, and the hard goodbye is a reminder that I have so much to be grateful for. To all who have been a part of this journey, thank you.

Nicholas Palihan

If I were entering SOA as a sixth grader, there would be so many things I'd do differently. But the one thing I would absolutely do differently is not procrastinate. Procrastination was something that genuinely took over my life. And it was not only when I wasn't necessarily motivated to analyze a piece composed by Lieberstram using Roman numerals. There were so many times when I'd rather be doing something more entertaining than studying or doing homework or preparing for



something else important and would just delay whatever task I had to do, thinking I had enough time. Even countless times that proved I was way off didn't stop me. Fortunately, it did get better over the years. I'd like to say I've matured and really started to control the instinct to put something off. But it's still difficult sometimes, because, obviously, I'd rather hang out with friends or watch TV or play with my dogs, rather than explain why the Mean Value Theorem applies to a function and that it just does. I just have to keep reminding myself that all the hard work will pay off in the end!

Reagan Passantino

I'd like to thank three teachers for making such a remarkable, positive impact on my time at SOA. First, Ms. Carter, who taught my forensics class during my freshman year, stood out as one of the most supportive and accommodating educators I have ever encountered. During a particularly stressful period in my life, she went above and beyond to support me in every possible way, while making the class both fun and captivating. It was evident that she genuinely cared for each of her students, not just academically but personally. She guided me through my highs and lows, offering wisdom that continues to resonate with me today.

Next, I want to acknowledge Ms. Miller, who reignited my passion for math. After experiencing several disappointing encounters with the subject, I found my curiosity waning. However, Ms. Miller's evident care and enthusiasm for her class transformed my attitude toward math. Seriously, they're not called dice—they're *fair number cubes*. My junior year stats honors class never had a dull moment, and while AP Stats may have challenged me this year, her unwavering support and kindness have left a lasting impression. For two years, her class has been one I have genuinely looked forward to attending, and I am truly grateful for that.

Last but certainly not least, I'd like to thank Mrs. Mortenson for supporting me in every aspect. Her class was lively and creative; I felt engaged in every single presentation, and the hands-on approach she has is incredibly beneficial. She has put up with not only my rowdy group of friends crowding her room during her lunchtime, but also our attempts to rope her into the shenanigans. She's the teacher that wrote me a recommendation letter to get into my dream college, yet she's also the teacher I will yap to about *Pokémon*, and really, what else could you ask for? From her, I gained not only a lasting education, but a safe space as well.

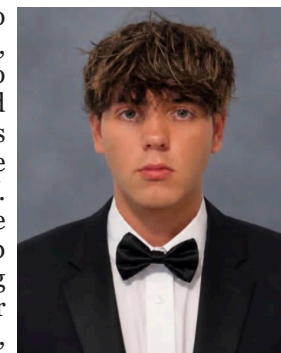
Aedyn Pawlyk

In 2036, I will have completed my Sports Management degree, and I plan to be working in the sports industry, specifically the NFL. This work could be player personnel, sports law, or something completely different. Whatever it is, my major at the University of South Carolina will adequately prepare me for it. Through internships and connections that my professors share with me, I will have every opportunity I could ask for. My classes will teach me the ins and outs of the industry. I am beyond blessed and excited that I am able to join one of the top Sports Management programs in the country.



Adrian Rayburn

In 2036, I want to be on the path to becoming a doctor, whether that's in medical school, residency, or already working. I've always wanted to do something important with my career that would help people, and medicine is one of the few things I could see myself doing long term. By then, I hope all the work I've put in now has started to pay off. I know my career choices and plans could change over the next ten years, but I still want to end up successful, financially stable, and doing something I actually care about. SOA helped prepare me for that by teaching me how to handle harder classes, deadlines, and more responsibility.



Jaidon Richardson

The teacher who has had the strongest impact on me is Mr. Colie, my AP Visual Arts teacher during my junior year. During my entire sophomore year, I felt as though I was inadequate and eventually became unmotivated to want to continue making art in the future. You could physically see the lack of motivation and confidence in my work from that time period. I was not producing art with the same level of creativity, and I was losing the joy for the activity that had brought me happiness since I could hold a pen to paper. It was not until my junior year, in a new environment, that I felt a sense of clarity and happiness in not only my ideas, but during my process of making art as well. Mr. Colie's laid back and supportive attitude has taught me the most important thing about being an artist that I had forgotten: creating art is about freeing your own happiness and expression. It is not about what others expect of you or want to see from you. He taught me how to find other ways to enjoy making art with different techniques, materials, and more self-direction. He has restored my confidence in what I create. Even after having him as my teacher, whenever I am feeling unmotivated or do not enjoy what I am creating, I remind myself of his teaching me to look for a different approach in my process, and that what's most important: that I prioritize the joy of making art instead of making art with the intent of pleasing a crowd. I will continue to carry and appreciate the impactful lessons he has taught me in my dream career of working in graphic design and even for the rest of my life.



Milo Robbins

I moved across the country from Santa Cruz, California, for a multitude of reasons, one of them being the education and musical arts opportunities that my mom and I saw at the School of the Arts. Going to SOA for the past four years of high school has been such a meaningful experience for me. I've grown as a person, been able to hone my abilities as a singer, and met many amazing people that I want to stay connected with for the rest of my life. I feel grateful for the opportunities that were created for me here, for the teachers who helped me do my best and wanted to see me succeed, and for the variety of talent and passion in every major that plays a part in making SOA such a special place.



Isabelle Saladin

I never truly gave much thought to how much attending SOA has shaped my life until my senior year. For the past seven years, I have been exposed to so many opportunities, experiences, and unforgettable lessons that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. Being surrounded by the arts from a young age has opened my eyes to how much influence and importance the arts carry. Attending SOA has only deepened my love for music, dance, writing, and theater that I couldn't have developed at any other school. I am so grateful for the teachers who have pushed me to become the best version of myself I can be and prepare me for the years to come as I experience the world. I am excited to continue engaging with the arts in my year abroad at FSU London and will always remember what sparked my passion for music and self-expression.



Evelyn Sanchez

I've attended SOA for seven years, and in that time I've been in twenty-five plays, survived one pandemic, was in a group chat with 109 people, have replaced two (personal) chromebooks, used an expo marker on four plexiglass dividers, played numerous games of hangman, was one of approximately eighty-nine extras in a school musical, fallen in love once, lost my earbuds thirty-four times, bought fourteen new pairs of earbuds, took two French classes, gone to Europe for the first time, had my heart broken, gone through four purses, went to five Jump Jive and Wails, replaced one backpack, had my first date, my first kiss, my first breakup, owned MANY pins, had three of my best friends move away, discovered that I love science, killed a starfish, written three short plays, co-wrote two others, acted in four student made films, stuck seventeen pencils in my hair and called it a look, wore fake glasses, needed real glasses, worked backstage for three Charleston Stage productions, been paired with a freaking awesome sixth grader, taught nineteen confused seniors how to format a play in Google Docs, starred in one thesis, applied to sixteen colleges, gone to two SC Thespians competitions, won three superiors, got into my dream school, taught at my old elementary school, befriended five (now) sophomores, read nearly 1000 books, heard some of the funnies jokes, been the butt of some not so funny jokes, lost dream roles, made terrible mistakes, learned my lesson over and over, gotten yelled at by teachers, gotten praise from teachers, cried hundreds of times, taken nine AP exams, bought \$129 worth of paintings from various visual artists, written three semesters worth of memories into a pocket sized legal notebook, and after all that, I wouldn't change a thing.



Sadie Scozzaro

In 2036, I hope to be working as a wildlife conservationist. I have always been in love with nature and animals. My family loves the outdoors, which led to a personal connection with nature. As a kid, I spent lots of time climbing trees, exploring parks, kayaking, hiking up mountains, and swimming in the ocean. I would feel so devastated when I learned about extinct animals due to poaching or habitat destruction. As I've grown older, I realized that I can help, and I will do just that! I am thrilled to be pursuing Natural Resource Conservation as my major. I cannot wait to tackle this coursework and pursue what I've always dreamed of. I am so excited to be

going off to college next year at Western Carolina University, in the beauty of the Appalachian Mountains. We must protect our world at all costs. Being surrounded by mountains will be perfect for a nature lover and environmentalist like me.

I look forward to getting a job that allows me to work towards conserving the gorgeous nature around us to benefit my community. I dream of working at the local, state, or national level to help save the air we breathe, the waters we drink, and protect our native animals and plants. I would love to work for a national park, a forestry company, or a natural resource management company. Working towards saving the planet is my ultimate goal, whether it's through employing wind energy across the globe, helping minimize deforestation, or restoring ecosystems. Even if I were just a small part of this work, I would feel so accomplished.



Kylie Sessions

If I had to do this all over again, I would take things a lot less seriously. I would remind myself that not every friendship is meant to last; they simply teach you how to grow. Instead of being so anxious and fearful of the future, I would be present in the moment. I would stop trying to rush my time, but enjoy it, knowing I will never be able to go back. I would put myself first, not forcing myself to stay friends with people I have already outgrown. I would show up to all the events and cherish my senior year of high school so much more, because these last moments are the ones I will remember forever. And lastly, I would take SO many more pictures so that I could look back at every odd phase of my life when I need a good laugh.



Ava Simancas

Ten years from now I will be twenty-eight years old. I've always wanted to write for a major magazine like *Vogue* or *Cosmopolitan*, because beauty has always been a big part of my life ever since COVID-19 hit. Post-COVID, I've noticed the changes in human behavior and the media shared on the internet. I think that being locked away in our rooms for a year, now six years ago, changed us. Most of us were hiding behind screens for that time, and we became acclimated to an environment where people do irrational things out of fear, such as making outbursts of violence, sharing hateful words, or lying to create fear within our communities so we turn against each other. Many television news networks have become a distraction. Major events often aren't covered adequately or right away. These changes have led me to rely on sources such as international news articles, stations, and social media pages, so I can see how everyone else in the world views America, since we are subject to censorship. So instead of working for the beauty industry, or writing about what my next prediction for the new tacky pattern trend is, my goal now is to write or create my own news outlet based on pure, unbiased facts, that covers the uncomfortable side of the news, from which we are often blindfolded. I plan to make this happen by not sitting around and waiting for things to be posted. I will try to find stories I can tell or share, and connect with as many people in this kind of industry.



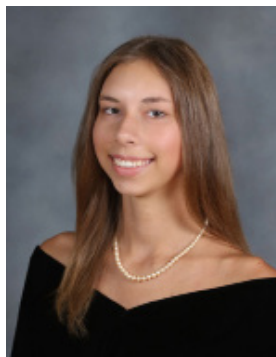
Maren Spangler

In 2036, I still want to be writing. I'd like to be published in a few well-known magazines and literary journals, and maybe have produced a collection of poetry and a novel or two. I'd like to have backpacked through Europe and started traveling through Asia, possibly as part of my job or just with some money I've saved up. I'd want to be starting a promising career either as a diplomat or a foreign aid worker, with the main intention of helping people. I'm going into college with a double major in Social Justice and International Politics with a minor in Creative Writing. Hopefully, that will lead to some form of graduate school, and ultimately a career in government through diplomacy or the Peace Corps. Ten years from now, I hope I have a dog and maybe a family, and that my parents are living comfortably and happily. I hope I have a beautiful life full of art, culture, and love.



Elliot Sprott

I have been at SOA since sixth grade. Throughout my many years at this school, I have seen lots of people come and go. However, the best part about moving from middle school to high school is watching everyone you know grow. Even with new students joining SOA for high school, everyone makes them feel welcome. One part I love about SOA is that we are all one big community and will help each other out. If anyone is ever struggling, there will always be students, teachers, and staff willing to help without complaining. Another aspect of SOA that I love and always look forward to is all the fun activities that happen in and outside of school. Convocation, performances, powderpuff, dances, and so much more. We forget that these activities don't happen as often at other schools. Not many schools have random flashmobs or school performances each quarter. I think it's really cool seeing all the talent and compassion that's at this school.



Hadley Thompson

Attending SOA has singlehandedly been the best decision of my life. Throughout my five years at this magical school, I have been met with the most sincere kindness, incredible support, a challenging education, and countless life changing opportunities. I came into SOA as a gangly, awkward, short haired thirteen-year-old, and I am confidently leaving as somebody who's ready to make an impactful difference in the world. The environment of being surrounded by artistically motivated people has the most uplifting inspiration. I grew up watching the upperclassmen radiate this social, creative, and just happy energy; and it made me so excited and grateful to have the opportunity to learn alongside them. This school celebrates its unique students; it applauds those who think outside of the box. I have been prepared to authentically be myself in the future, and I will forever thank this school for teaching me that who you are, is worth being celebrated. SOA introduced me to the brightest souls, challenging perspectives, and a strong mindset. I have learned the



importance of arts in education, and I will continue to enjoy and support art in my daily life. I am so incredibly lucky to have spent such fundamental years of my life in such a passionate environment. I hope the best for my classmates. Congratulations to all! :]

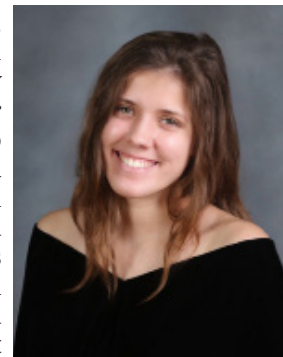
Yashika Trumata

High school felt longer when I was living it, but now it feels like something I blinked through. Four years became a collection of small moments: rushing through hallways, laughing too hard in class, staying up late for assignments, and learning how to become someone I could recognize. It wasn't always easy. There were days that felt endless and years that changed me more than I realized. Somewhere between freshman uncertainty and senior goodbyes, I found parts of myself I did not know were there. As graduation approaches, I realize high school was never just about academics, but more about the person I became along the way.



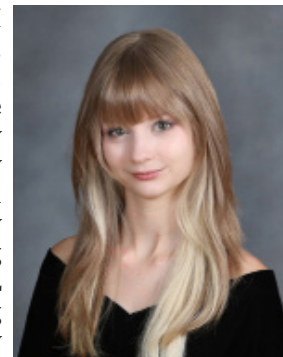
Viktoriya Ustymenko

An SOA education is pretty cool looking back, and getting the opportunity to be creative at school is something that makes a really special community here. Seeing all the students supporting each other at performances, and how proud everyone is to show off their art is really awesome, and has been a core part of my education at SOA. Walking through the halls and hearing vocal and strings rehearse and seeing the visual arts majors work on the wall is such a genuinely unique experience. It makes high school fun. Everyone here is really motivated and has incredible dreams, and I think the environment does a good job fostering that.



Blakeney Vaughan

In 2036, I hope to have traveled to at least five to ten different countries. My main goal is to find a company I can travel with so I can not only experience different parts of the world, but also have a reason to travel, doing something I love. I have no set company I would like to be with now, so I'm really just waiting to see what comes my way. I can't wait to meet new people who can introduce me to that kind of life, and I'm willing to work really hard to achieve it! Aside from traveling as part of my profession, I hope to continue my work in fashion and possibly design on the side for fun. I've already been sewing for more than ten years, so stopping now would feel like losing a part of me. I WILL make this happen, and I am confident that attending SCAD will open new opportunities to achieve my goal. I have had so many friends and family help me with my journey, and maybe they will be part of my future too! I can't wait to see what happens. (I also really want a red Mini Cooper convertible or a hearse, a pet bat, and a Samoyed puppy).



Evelyn Vasquez-Ortiz

Entering SOA was unexpected because I never thought of myself as a creative person. Even though fashion was always around me, I never imagined learning it in school. During my four years at SOA, I learned many new skills, such as using a sewing machine, reading patterns, and making clothes. At first, I doubted myself and was nervous to try new things. Over time, I became more confident and started to enjoy being creative. SOA helped me grow as a person and taught me that creativity is something you can develop. My experience here changed the way I see myself and my abilities.



Whitney Werking

In 2036, I hope to be employed, perhaps in NYC if student debt isn't insane, because that would be super awesome. Plus, I would love to design interiors for various commercial buildings in NYC, such as restaurants, hotels, stores, schools, and more. The concept of doing this is so cool to me; it's a way I can leave a mark, even if it's small, on a city that has been through so many stages of development. I want to create spaces I enjoy, and that let me use my creativity to its fullest potential. I also hope I get to travel as much as possible and do things for the plot!



Rachel Wheelon

My Creative Writing class has become a second family. They are seriously some of the funniest people I know, and it's hard to think that I won't see them everyday. The teachers are my unpaid therapists, and they have never failed to support me. The whole class has grown up together, and it allows for the birth of the most embarrassing stories. I'll miss Niamh telling me the definition of every word I don't know. I'll need someone else to educate me on pop culture and slang without Val and Yash. I won't get to hear Gwenny's hiccups daily or watch Nora film TikTok dances in class. I'll miss Brooklyn spouting random facts, Sophia knowing the answers to any question I could ask, and Rayne informing me of all the drama from other classes. I'm going to have to say goodbye to Vickie's hugs and Kate always checking up on me like the Mama Bear she is. I'll miss working with Maren on art history (though I will not miss that awful subject). And all of the jokes Maddie makes about my mom will cease to exist, thankfully. I'll miss Ms. Hart always smiling at me in the hall and asking me how I'm doing. I'll miss Ms. DeTiberus' "Keep going!" at the end of emails. I'll miss scaring Mr. Hammes with pictures of Kermit the Frog and talking with him about literally everything. This class has given me a place to be fully myself, and the people in it have gotten me through high school.



Ava Whitener

One of the most important aspects of my experience at SOA has been playing the violin. During my time here, music became such an important part of my life and gave me some of my best high school memories. Performing

in musicals such as *Phantom of the Opera* and *The Sound of Music* was something I always looked forward to because every show felt different, and there was always excitement and pressure going into it. Those experiences shaped me a lot, both as a musician and as a person, and they are memories I know I'll keep with me for a long time.

One of the hardest but most rewarding things I did at SOA was perform the *Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto* for my senior thesis. Learning such a difficult piece while balancing school and everything else going on senior year was definitely stressful at times, but it taught me how to manage my time better and practice more efficiently. I learned that progress does not always come from practicing for hours, but from knowing how to use your time well and staying consistent.

This fall, I'll be attending Lynn Conservatory of Music to study Violin Performance under Andrés Cárdenes, and I know my time at SOA played a huge role in helping me get there.



Charlotte Whitley

I am so lucky to have attended SOA for seven years, and although I am ready for a change, it is a bittersweet feeling to leave somewhere that has been a constant in my life.

When I was in fifth grade, I actually did not want to apply. I wanted to go to Moultrie with all of my friends — but my parents had me audition and now, seven years later, I am so grateful they did. SOA was truly the place for me.

The environment I have experienced at SOA has been wonderful (though not without its flaws). I have made amazing friends, I have had wonderful teachers (Ms. Whittemore, Ms. Oakley, Ms. Mortenson, and Mr. Martin, to name a few). I feel that SOA has set me up for success.

If I were to go back and change some things, I would not have taken a specific math class in the eighth grade... and taken it online... I would have saved my art from sixth and seventh grade (I think I just threw it all away). Oh, and I would not have cut my hair in ninth... Other than that, SOA has been a wonderful experience.

I have loved being in visual arts. I have had Ms. Richardson for four out of my seven years at SOA, and she has made the biggest impact on me. Due to her influence, I have honed my skills and I have grown my voice as an artist. Now, I am going to Rhode Island School of Design.

I will miss the weird conversations in the art room, Ms. Rich disappearing right when we need her, the messy tables, bothering Mr Colie, the comfy couch, chatting with my friends and painting while listening to music.



Bella-Adore Williams

So many teachers and staff members have influenced my time at SOA. Those who impacted me most are Ms. Miller, Ms. Phillips, Mr. Martin, Ms. Mortensen, Ms. Paeschke, Mr. Watts, Ms. G, Ms. Gomez, Ms. Henderson, Coach Butts, Ms. Derrickson, Ms. Smith, Ms. Campbell, Ms. Audrey, Senior Verone, Officer Baber, Mr. Kenny, Ms. Horn, Ms. Edwards, Mr. Christensen and Mr. Grant. Sadly, not everyone's thank you could be included in this short essay, but please know I love you all! Ms. Miller, I was very afraid to take your class, but in the end I learned so much. Mr. Martin, you teach your students that not only should they have autonomy but how to have agency. You prepared me for so much in my life! Your CCSD & SOA Teacher of the

Year title is well earned and deserved. #Martbama2026. Ms. Mortensen, you have been the sweetest most knowledgeable teacher I have ever had. To take your marine science class as a sophomore in a class full of seniors to then a senior in zoology in a class full of underclassmen was cool. Ms. Paeschke, thank you for always being there to listen. I still remember the comments you left on my final eighth grade essay and reference them when writing. I love you! Ms. G, the quiet of your room has helped me pass many classes. Your encouragement and love are helping me get this diploma! Ms. Gomez & Ms. Henderson, thank you for turning our library into a space where classes and majors don't matter. Ms. Derrickson & Ms. Smith, any issue I ever had with anyone was handled with grace and fairness. So for that, thank you both! Ms. Campbell, you were so fundamental to my freshman year experience. Ms. Audrey, thank you for giving me my theatrical spark back. Mr. Kenny, thank you for your guidance, advice, protection, and support. Finally, Ms. Edwards, thank you so much for being so supportive as I navigated the announcements!



Estee Yu

My time at SOA has been like a rollercoaster, and if you don't know, I am deathly afraid of rollercoasters. I remember my first visit here as an eighth grader, the unfamiliar walls that seemed to judge my every step, the new faces that all blurred into one, even the piano keys I knew so well suddenly felt like strangers. I was taunted, towered over by this (at the time) gigantic place that pulled my stomach in a million different directions. In one of my first piano classes, I was urged to "improvise" in front of the class, and I truly felt as if I were plunging into the abyss. But somewhere in the middle of that beginning, the drop began to feel less condemning and more like a cool weightlessness. I'd say the most valuable part of SOA to me is its environment of freedom -- freedom to wear whatever you want, to be as loud or quiet as you want, to like anything you want. SOA has been a place where I felt I could really belong, and it's a place where tons of others have felt the same, simply because it makes room for anyone. These past four years have definitely been an experience. I've gone through quite a few turns and loops and maybe even a backwards track or two, but I've made it to the end, and all I can say is that I'm glad to have been able to enjoy the ride.



Maxim Zakharchyk

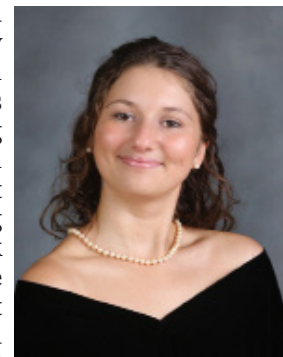
The past six-seven years have shaped who I am today, and I've watched it shape the people around me, too. Being with all of these people consistently every year has been such a surreal experience, and while it's happening you don't even notice!! I came here with a hope to turn some things around for myself, to branch out and make friends, and over the past handful of years I figured out how to do that for myself. Out of extreme lows and extreme highs, I've found myself reflecting on the highs more. When I look back on my time at SOA, I can only help but think about the great times. Lunch with my friends in the library, seeing Ms. Edwards for the announcements in the morning, seeing Ms. G for some snacks at lunch, dropping into



Ms. Paeshke's for a chat, being taught by Ms. Scofield for three years in a row, having Ms. Smith scold me for being late, Ms. Cappelman (who also regularly witnessed my being late), seeing Ms. Butts and being inspired by her daily quotes, to greeting Mr. Watts at the door. All the classes I had with my friends, although rare, were laughs the whole time, and I wouldn't want to goof around with anyone else. It'd be hard to say I DIDN'T learn something in these past six-seven years at SOA, but graduating this year, I leave with more knowledge about life and friendship than anything else.

Lillian Zimmerman

In 2036, I will be twenty-seven-years-old pursuing my career, and I hope that I am happy and successful on whatever path I choose. I plan on graduating college with a degree in biological sciences and either pursuing a job in the medical field or being a biologist and studying amoebas in Puerto Rico. In the medical field I would enjoy helping people get better, and as a biologist I would enjoy spending most of my time among the natural world. I think that I would enjoy both of these careers because I like science, and am interested in learning more about living organisms and how they impact the world around us. I hope that I'll meet lots of people and make friends from various walks of life, man or amoeba.



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What is the most important thing you've learned at SOA?

Annika Baran: How to get all of my work done in a study hall.

Josie Barrineau: The most important thing I learned at SOA is to keep your major teachers close. I've gone to SOA since sixth grade, and you work with your major teachers for a long time. So it's important to keep a close relationship with them.

Julia Bates: How important it is to do the things you love, and to manage your time well enough to keep doing those things.

Bryce Beasley: To be the artist before the critic

Riley Brockman: Resilience. Getting through the hard moments, no matter how difficult they may be.

Jenna Clafiore: Seniors CAN lose powderpuff...

Kennedy Colie: I've learned that thinking positively makes things much easier. By embracing what I was doing in my classes rather than loathing it, I became more successful in school and overall happier in my life. Viewing learning as excitement is something I will definitely carry with me through college and the rest of my life.

Mary Kate Colvin: If someone is choosing to judge you, that says something about them, not you. The right friends will make you feel accepted, not insecure.

Amelia Counts: Your passion requires dedication to be successful.

Ella Cutaia: I've learned that the arts really do matter and they can bring everyone together in every form, and that's one of the most important things ever.

Luciano Cusatis: To always have fun no matter what you're doing.

Reilly Dukes: How to be okay with being myself.

Madi Deaton: To not take things so seriously. I'm my harshest critic and a little bit of a perfectionist, so this was hard to learn, but it's better to go into something knowing you are giving it your all, than thinking about mistakes you could make.

Audra Elm: Be true to yourself, and you'll find the people who are meant to be around you.

Lila Elm: Being yourself will make you both happier and more successful.

Micaiah Fagan: SOA has taught me many essential lessons from life skills to mastering the arts. If I had to prioritize, I'd say I learned to never stop learning, being yourself, or choosing to create. As an artist and academic student, I've faced many setbacks and challenges that have been very discouraging and have made me consider quitting.

Attending SOA helped me shake back and continue to create and be authentically me whether it was hard or not because at the end of the day, mistakes lead to growth.

Madie Fletcher: Never listen to advice from someone who you wouldn't trade lives or hair with.

Donte Foxworth: I've learned to follow my heart and not really care what others think of what I want to do.

Jordyn Goodman: Be yourself. There's no one else like you, so don't try to be someone else. It took me a while to learn that but I'm glad I did!

Nathaniel Green: Don't try to be anyone else; being yourself is enough.

Grey Harlos: How to Collaborate.

Will Henrickson: The most important thing I have learned is calculus from Ms. Whittemore.



Ayla Hollar: It's okay to go into something without knowing anything. What matters is applying yourself and accepting help, even when you don't think you need it.

Sasha Kagan: One of the most important things I've learned is to be open-minded and accepting.

Mikey Kardell: Always plan to leave at least fifteen minutes earlier than you want to. The train will sneak up on you when you least expect it.

Nicholas King: You learn a lot more from human interactions than you ever could from a textbook, for better or for worse.

Elyse Lang: Nobody cares about you as much as you think they do, so don't let other people's negative perceptions bring you down. Be yourself, find your passions, and enjoy what you love!

Kate Largent: No person can fit completely in one box. Everyone is multitalented and multifaceted, and there is more to every artist at this school than meets the eye. If we try to restrict ourselves to a label, we'll only be limiting our creativity and, by extension, the positive impact we can make on the

world. As artists and as people, we should embrace the many different sides of ourselves and explore the many possibilities of who we can be.

Addy Lawrence: The most important thing I've learned at SOA is that nobody is judging you.

Maddie Leluc: Don't be afraid to try something new! Life is too short and precious to be afraid of failure.

Anna Grace Leshner: As long as you're passionate about it, you can achieve anything. I'm not talking about relationships or getting someone else to fulfill something for you, I mean something for yourself. Share your poems, your music, your love, and just keep trying. As long as it's really true and made out of passion, not greed, you'll be fulfilled.

Abigail Manley: Just be yourself. If someone treats you poorly for it, stop hanging out with them. It's their problem, not yours. Basically, stand up for who you are.

Jack Mears: Discipline. I never really realized how much practice, dedication, and networking are needed in the performing arts community. SOA taught me how important consistency and hard work are, not only as a performer but also as a person.

Josie Meloeny: The most important thing I've learned at SOA is that sometimes the "traditional" approach isn't the right approach for you – and that's ok.

Kynisha Middleton-Gladden: I've learned that SOA isn't just a school. It's a lifestyle, and it's a community.

Shelby Miller: The most important thing I have learned at SOA is that Chicago is the Second City because New York is full of itself and is second to none, but Picasso sent Chicago a super cool statue of his dog. Then the Mayor unveiled it and people were like "This is cool but the gangs." And this lady was like "If the kids can play improv games, then the gang violence will stop." Rockefeller showed up and was like "steal steel." etc.

Rex Mincey: Joy is a resistance to your opps and people who try to keep you in a box. Keep shining, keep smiling.

Sara Mojica Supelano: I've learned that greatness doesn't have an age. Anyone can be brilliant with good guidance and discipline. SOA taught me that we don't need to wait for college to start a creative professional life. Follow the dreams, even if it's scary.

Abbey Morea: The most important thing I've learned at SOA is don't be afraid to ask for help whether that's from teachers or your peers. If you are asking for help from your teachers, it's better

What is the most important thing you've learned at SOA?

to ask the "stupid" questions and get it right, than do nothing at all and get it wrong. The majority of the time, your peers have the same question.

Mathis Morse: The most important thing I learned at SOA is how to lie to subs when I want to leave.

Kylah Munoz: Choosing just one thing is hard. However, I think the social skills and adaptability that I have learned at SOA will take me the furthest in life. The diverse community that SOA represents encompasses individuals from all walks of the earth and immersing myself in such an area has changed me for the better. I can relate with individuals who I, superficially, would have nothing in common with. Most of all I love my school and everything I did during my time here.

Suzie Nordoff: To take nothing for granted, and that time moves by very fast. I learned to slow down and enjoy every day while still preparing for the future.

Emma Norton: Have courage. Putting yourself out there is never not going to be scary, but you should do it even when you're scared. Never stop trying new things.

Nicko Palihan: The most important thing I learned at SOA is discipline. Throughout all the AP classes and the rehearsals and performances for vocal, I've been put through so many obstacles and trials that I've had to overcome. Because of that, I've learned that discipline is such an important factor in succeeding in anything you do. Anytime I felt like having a lazy day or just didn't feel motivated to practice or study, I had to remind myself that it was worth doing and that all my hard work and sleepless nights would pay off. And I truly believe that it did.

Reagan Passantino: Don't procrastinate! There's going to be tough conversations you don't want to have and assignments you don't feel like doing, but I promise you, inevitably you will have to do them, so put your maximum effort into them!

Aedyn Pawlyk: How to correctly manage my time

Ruby Reddington: Not to be afraid to put yourself out there, and to cherish the moments

Ava Reynolds: It's ok to be passionate about your art/craft. Everyone here has something special that they are amazing at and are passionate about. You are all here for the same reasons and it's so amazing to get to go to school with such creative and talented people. Also be friends with other majors. It's easy to just stay in your major, but it's amazing to have friends in other majors and getting to see what they do.

Jaidon Richardson: I've learned to not sell myself short, and to be more confident in who I am and what I create as an artist.

Milo Robbins: Don't stoop low to fit in with the people around you; don't limit yourself because

you're scared of what others might think. Do what you love and what you are passionate about, because if you don't, you won't give your life meaning.

Izzy Saladin: I've learned the value of individuality and celebrating the fine arts. True happiness comes from unapologetically doing what you love.

Evelyn Sanchez: Always self advocate, and don't be afraid to ask for help (from a friend or a teacher).



Sadie Scozzaro: Keep your head up. Don't let anyone put you down or tell you that you're not as important as you really are.

Kylie Sessions: Surround yourself with the right people, because you are who you hang around.

Ava Simancas: Do not compare yourself to anyone else in your major. It is important to remember that you got into SOA for a reason, don't try to be like the next person.

Maren Spangler: SOA taught me that I don't need to fit into a box to be accepted. Without SOA, my worldview would be much more limited and without beauty.

Elliott Sprott: The most important thing I've learned at SOA is to get out of your comfort zone.

It's good to try new things and see how everything turns out.

Hadley Thompson: That I am not going to live a life that I'm not proud of. I've learned what it takes to get far, and I'm not planning on stopping anytime soon!!

Yashika Trumata: How to survive on four hours of sleep and cafeteria food.

Viktoriya Ustymenko: Time management is really important. Also the cafeteria fries sophomore year were really, really good. (plz bring them back)

Blakeney Vaughan: I've learned that you won't make it anywhere if you don't have a voice. Following the crowd will leave you in the same place, but straying away and voicing whatever may trouble you will actually benefit you. I also learned I'm never taking another natural science ever again. It's not my calling.

Marz Watson: The most important thing I've learned here is that everybody is somebody and you can't really hide away in this school. I also learned that acts of kindness are never wasted. I've helped and talked to many people at this school, whether it was little things like handing someone a paper or just being there and listening to someone in need. When reading my yearbook messages from friends, there were so many paragraphs about how I impacted each person who signed. No short messages in sight. I realized that I am deeply respected by my peers and kindness pays off.

Whitney Werking: To appreciate all the different art forms and their impact and importance.

Rachel Wheelon: You can always make new friends no matter where you are in high school. I didn't meet some of my best friends until this year.

Ava Whitener: To be confident in my abilities and not compare myself to others.

Charlotte Whitley: I have learned that I can get through anything and make it out alright.

Bella-Adore Williams: The most important thing I learned at SOA has been how to remain authentic. In all seven years at this school I have met so many interesting people. People who I loved and adored. Who had cool style or hair, and before I knew who I was I wanted to be like them. But there is so much beauty in who you are, who you show up as. So always be yourself! - I hate how cliché I sound

Estee Yu: There will always be so much further to go later on, so don't forget to take a look at the "you" of right now.

Lillian Zimmerman: Probably the most important thing I learned is to pursue things that I am passionate about. I started in the fashion program here but then switched to the visual arts program because I have always liked drawing and painting.

What quote do you want to be remembered by?

Josie Barrineau: I want to be remembered by jazz guitarist Joe Pass's quote: "If you hit a wrong note, then make it right by what you play afterward." This advice is so useful in learning music but also in life. If you make mistakes, make them right by what you do afterward.

Riley Brockman: My senior quote! "What an incredible power, the ability to grow up." -*Steven Universe*.

Annika Baran: "The trees ran away and the animals withered." "What are these old ladies doing?"

Julia Bates: "It may be raining, but there's a rainbow above you." -The Eagles

Bryce Beasley: "Anything you do let it come from you, then it will be new" -Stephen Sondheim

Jenna Clafiore: "Right...right..." -Krispy Kreme lady

Kennedy Colie: "Work smarter, not harder."

Mary Kate Colvin: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)

Amelia Counts: "WE are making it" - Audra Elm and Grey Harlos

Ella Cutaia: "They can change their minds, but they can't change me" -Jim Croce

Luciano Cusatis: "Did you realize that you were a champion in their eyes" - Steely Dan

Reilly Dukes: "A-ca-scuse me? Synchronized lady dancing to a Mariah Carey chart-topper is not lame!" - Aubrey from *Pitch Perfect*

Madi Deaton: "I'll just do my homework at lunch."

Audra Elm: "Always stop to photograph the cows" - Daniel Elm

Lila Elm: "I just believe in me." -John Lennon

Micaiah Fagan: "You're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think." -Winnie the Pooh

Madie Fletcher: "You do not have to be good. / You do not have to walk on your knees / For a hundred miles through the desert, repenting. / You only have to let the soft animal of your body / love what it loves." -Mary Oliver

Donte Foxworth: "Stay true to your heart."

Jordyn Goodman: "Do what you love and love what you do because then you'll never have to work a day in your life."

Nathaniel Green: Spread joy, be intelligent, love your neighbor with integrity, and never doubt your worth. -Nathaniel Green

Grey Harlos: "Mustaaarrd." -Dr Cusatis.

Will Henrickson: "Don't let school get in the way of your education." - Dr. Cusatis

Ayla Hollar: "We need to laugh. Otherwise, we'd never stop crying." Samira Mohan, *The Pitt*

Sasha Kagan: The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be.

Mikey Kardell: "What did you say? I didn't hear you."

Nicholas King: "If you're lucky enough to find something that you love, and you have a shot at being good at it, don't stop, don't put it down" - Taylor Swift

Elyse Lang: "Sometimes people are beautiful. Not in looks. Not in what they say. Just in what they are." - Markus Zusak, *I Am the Messenger*

Kate Largent: "I can't help but wonder what this

fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." - Winston Churchill

Josie Meloeny: "Listen to the mustn'ts, child. Listen to the don'ts. Listen to the shouldn'ts, the impossibles, the won'ts. Listen to the never haves, then listen close to me... Anything can happen, child. Anything can be." - Shel Silverstein

Kynisha Middleton-Gladden: "How do YOU feel about it?" With me being a senior, I was seen as someone to look up to (figuratively) and someone to ask if they like something or not. I like to answer with, "how do YOU feel about it?" because it makes them look within themselves. I also say it because if you like it, that's all that matters because people are going to always have a negative reaction to something.

Shelby Miller: "Triscut is a bird" or "Do you not know I am woman?"

Rex Mincey: "In this terrifying world, all we have are the connections that we make." - Bojack Horseman

Sara Mojica Supelano: "Vivan los LATINOSSSS"

Abbey Morea: "Don't let school get in the way of your education." -Dr. Cusatis

Mathis Morse: I would like to be remembered for "not to beat a dead horse but...."

Kylah Munoz: Growing up my mom always told me to "Be fearless in the pursuit of what sets your soul on fire." To this day I live by this quote, being brave in the face of adversity and hardship is a characteristic that sets you apart from your peers. That is what I want to be remembered for.

Suzie Nordoff: "And when things start to happen, don't worry, don't stew. Just go right along and you'll start happening too." - Dr. Seuss

Emma Norton: Never compromise who you are trying to please someone else. You will never be able to make everyone happy, so if you're happy and you're not hurting anyone else, that's all that matters.

Nicko Palihan: "Motivation will only get you so far. But discipline will take you farther than the stars." - Nicholas Palihan (I thought of this after answering question 4 lol)

Reagan Passantino: "Love thy neighbor, be a son to mother nature, and don't forget to enjoy the ride" - Joost Klein

Aedyn Pawlyk: "I ain't here for a long time, I'm here for a good time" - George Strait

Ruby Reddington: "Silence Idiots."



world could be if we all held each other with a bit more empathy" -Jorge Rivera-Herrans, *EPIC: The Musical*

Addy Lawrence: "We are not defined by the challenges in our lives, but how we face them." - Stevie Nicks

Maddie Leluc: "There is no such thing as 'too late' in life." - Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson*

Anna Grace Leshner: "There is one thing they can't hear: the silent beat of creativity within you—that calling beckoning you to trust your gut, follow your heart, and do what your soul demands." -Connor Franta

Abigail Manley: Be true to yourself, even if it's hard.

Jack Mears: "Success is not final, failure is not

What quote do you want to be remembered by?

Ava Reynolds: “Every day may not be good, but there’s something good in every day.”

Jaidon Richardson: “There’s no place quite like here, there’s no better time than now.”

Milo Robbins: “Preparation can only take you so far, after that you gotta take a few leaps of faith.” - Michael Scofield, *Prison Break*

Izzy Saladin: “Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.” - T.S. Eliot

Evelyn Sanchez: “Hush up and watch Magic School Bus” - sixth grade me

Sadie Scozzaro: “Sometimes you gotta fall before you fly.” - Sleeping with Sirens

Kylie Sessions: “I didn’t know exactly where I was going, but I’m proud of where I ended up.”

Ava Simancas: “Any storm you face will transform itself into a crystalline rainbow, in divine timing.” This was my senior quote and it is my absolute favorite quote. It basically means that there will be hardships and lessons you’ll

eventually have to face. It is important to learn from mistakes, but in the end everything will work out the way it’s meant to be.

Maren Spangler: “Where there’s life, there’s hope.” - J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*

Elliott Sprott: “Don’t let anyone make you feel like you don’t deserve what you want.” - Heath Ledger in *10 Things I Hate About You*.

Hadley Thompson: Kindness is never wasted, even if it’s not returned.

Yashika Trumata: “Yash, it’s not that funny.”

Viktoriya Ustymenko: Does anyone have a chromebook charger?

Blakeney Vaughan: No quote, but anytime someone sees a bat, I want them to think of me! I draw them everywhere on everything.

Marz Watson: “Be your own star”

Whitney Werking: “Monkey covering eye emoji thanks!” - Tyler Oakley

Rachel Wheelon: Creative Writing is not an English class.

Ava Whitener: “When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion.” — Dale Carnegie

Charlotte Whitley: “In a world too often governed by corruption and arrogance, it can be difficult to stay true to one’s literary and philosophical principles.” - Larry Your-waiter from *ASOUE*

Bella-Adore Williams: “I can’t want you to succeed more than you want to” - My Dad, Lamar C. Williams

Estee Yu: “And don’t worry about the bits you can’t understand. Sit back and allow the words to wash around you, like music.” - *Matilda*, by Roald Dahl

Lillian Zimmerman: “Don’t follow leaders, watch the parking meters” - Bob Dylan. This quote sticks out to me because it encourages one to create their own path but also do what they are supposed to do in society.

What will you miss most about SOA?

Annika Baran: Eating lunch with my friends outside everyday since freshman year!

Josie Barrineau: I will miss Convocation and in-school performances, where all of the majors showcase what they learn. I remember how blown away I was at my first high school convocation. I will also miss getting out of class to watch theater shows!

Julia Bates: I will miss how talented and driven all of the students are, especially in their majors.

Bryce Beasely: Long walks to the gender nooch.

Riley Brockman: The University I am heading to is mostly full of STEM students, so I’m going to miss constantly being surrounded by artists.

Jenna Clafiore: Eating lunch with my best friends every day.

Kennedy Colie: I will miss the community. Everyone is so kind to each other, and I will miss these days at this interesting school where we all get along. In vocal, we are all so connected and close to each other, and it’s like that in almost every other major too. The bond that SOA students share is very special and very rare.

Mary Kate Colvin: I will miss my favorite underclassmen, co-leading FCA, and the sense of community at this school. I definitely won’t be missing the geese.

Amelia Counts: I will miss being obnoxious with my friends in art class.

Ella Cutaia: I will miss my friends and my sense of community. I have grown up with the same people since sixth grade. It’s going to be really hard not being with them anymore.

Luciano Cusatis: The ability to have my major and my academics so neatly intertwined, and more

loving cheers, uplifting community, and thoughtful connections.

Madi Deaton: The supportive atmosphere! You have built-in friends from your major who are always improving with you and teachers who want you to succeed. There’s no better place to become a well-rounded artist and academic student than SOA.



Audra Elm: The people. Especially Ms. Rich and my major class - we feel like a family.

Lila Elm: I will miss getting to hang out and play music with my best friends every day.

Micaiah Fagan: I’ll miss many aspects of SOA, but the biggest one will be the endless support and guidance I received from teachers. A school is judged by not only grade point averages and achievements, but also its environment and staff. I am forever grateful for all the teachers and administrators who have guided me, looked out for me, and shown their care and support. It is because of them that I am inspired to keep learning.

Madie Fletcher: Cafeteria garlic knots.

Donte Foxworth: I’ll miss my band classes with Mr. King the most. My spring concert definitely told me that.

Jordyn Goodman: All of my friends being in one place.

Nathaniel Green: My babies I’m leaving behind.

importantly the ability to play basketball with my friends during lunch.

Reilly Dukes: I will miss the supportive nature that comes with a tight-knit school like this. Going to a large city like Chicago, I know I’ll long for the

What will you miss most about SOA?

Grey Harlos: That unforgettable chicken sandwich. All of the world's GOATs share one common trait. Consistency

Will Henrickson: I think I'll miss orchestra the most since the music we play is so good.

Ayla Hollar: Getting to gather outside during lunch with my friends, where some of our most memorable conversations happened. SOA introduced me to some of my closest friends, which I will forever be grateful for!

Sasha Kagan: I will miss playing piano in the mornings instead of being in an academic class. Compared to other schools, it is truly a unique experience.

Mikey Kardell: I am going to miss the friends that I have made at SOA. It is human nature to believe that we will all stay the same and remain close with all of the people here, but life naturally causes distance. I will keep in touch with most of my friends, but the closeness that I have with them now will be frozen in time inside the walls of SOA.

Nicholas King: I will miss the connections I've made with my friends and teachers.

Elyse Lang: Being surrounded by people who appreciate art.

Kate Largent: The thing I will miss most about SOA is the people. I have loved being a part of a community of artists, and I truly felt like I belonged here. I was so lucky to get to work with such amazing artists and make such wonderful friends.

Addy Lawrence: I will miss seeing my friends everyday.

Maddie Leluc: I will miss being surrounded by such passionate, devoted, and intelligent people. The talent of everyone at SOA has always made me want to be better.

Anna Grace Leshner: The environment. I love being in a school surrounded by art, where not a single wall is left blank and the air has a sort of excitement about it with a touch of music somewhere or other.

Abigail Manley: The other students.

Jack Mears: I'll miss the arts programs and the community the most. I honestly haven't found a college with the same level of choral excellence and performance opportunities that SOA offers. The teachers here are incredibly dedicated, especially Mr. Rogers and Ms. Hammond. I've even had college interviews where deans of performing arts programs told me, "We have a great program, but our productions won't be at the same caliber you're used to with Ms. Hammond." I think that says so much about how special the arts programs at SOA really are. I will also miss the people. I have not yet met one individual who is inherently a "bad person." Everyone is so kind and open to ideas.

Josie Meloeny: What I will miss most about

SOA is the uninterrupted hour and a half each day dedicated to art.

Kynisha Middleton-Gladden: I'll miss the community. There is always going to be drama in different areas, but our majors never cease to collaborate. From musicals, to Dr Cusatis' concerts, to convocations and fashion shows. We all come together to make something happen.

Shelby Miller: I will miss planning what classes to leave to get El Molino or Moe's.

Rex Mincey: My second aunties, Ms. Henderson and Coach Butts; my friend in need, Ms. Mortenson; my TED Talk listener, Mr. Cantlin (and his physics class); my fairy godfather and fairy godmother,



Mr. Martin and Ms. Paeschke; the queen bees of it all, Ms. Gomez and Dr. Cook; and my partner in crime, Mr. Kenny. (He will get jiggy with you in the real way.) AND last but certainly not least, the sweet, sweet custodians and my vocal teachers Mr. Robin Rogers and Ms. Hammond. Thank you for taking a chance on me.

Sara Mojica Supelano: I'll miss coming to fashion everyday with my favorite people.

Abbey Morea: I will probably miss my major class. Everyone there is so close with one another and it really feels like a community.

Mathis Morse: Long talks in the parking lot after shows or in the morning.

Kylah Munoz: Leaving SOA has made me excited for what is to come; however, the people that I will be leaving have me absolutely gutwrenched. The individuals who make up this community are so

special and dear to my heart. I have made friends that I know will last a lifetime and I hope that each graduate that walks in the years that follow mine is just as pleased with the people they have met as I am.

Suzie Nordoff: I will miss all the people. Those here now and those who've graduated. Every person who is or was in my life has impacted me in some way and I'm extremely grateful for that. I will also miss when I was an underclassman and I would roam around the school with my friends and go to the vending machine or talk to my teachers. Sometimes during classes at the end of the year I would sit outside and tan with my friends. A

school that lets students make choices with their time, inspires independence. It allows one to balance out their responsibilities on their own. Growing up, I went to Montessori schools, which teach this, my whole life before SOA, and I've noticed a similar environment at this school.

Emma Norton: Absolutely the people. At SOA I have found a community of friends and teachers who have offered me unconditional love and support, and I'll miss walking down the hallways and meeting a friendly face everywhere I go.

Nicko Palihan: I'll miss my friends. I know that's such a cliché, but it's a cliché for a reason. I've been attending SOA since sixth grade, so I've known these people for almost half of my life. We've all been through so much together, and I can't believe I'm not going to be seeing them next year. At least not until I visit them!

Reagan Passantino: I'll miss the diversity and creativity. You can really meet anyone and everyone with the most niche and unique interests or styles. I learn about such randomly interesting stuff simply because I'm surrounded by so many different people

with so many different hobbies and passions.

Aedyn Pawlyk: The daily interactions with my closest friends.

Ruby Reddington: Seeing my friends everyday, and eating lunch with Mr. Kenny.

Ava Reynolds: Getting to practice my craft with my peers who love it as well. I will also miss all the special celebrations and performances that SOA does; it just adds to the environment and makes SOA special.

Jaidon Richardson: I will miss the creative enthusiasm of SOA.

Milo Robbins: The amazing community of musicians, artists, teachers, and especially best friends that I will remember and keep in touch with for the rest of my life.

Izzy Saladin: I will miss all the unique things about SOA that I took for granted, like convocations

What will you miss most about SOA?

and flash mobs!

Evelyn Sanchez: All my friends I made in theater specialty classes (mechanicals make sure to call me and Kent every once and a while).

Sadie Scozzaro: The amazing friends I have made here, and the performances.

Kylie Sessions: My friends, because we are all going to separate colleges.

Ava Simancas: I will probably miss all the naps I've taken in Mr. Hammes's class. Good riddance to those awful geese though.

Maren Spangler: I'll miss my major, creative writing, the most. I've had the most fabulous teachers these past four years, and I'm very sad to leave them. Mr. Hammes, especially, has given me great life lessons that have led me to my path for college, my relationships, and my faith.

Elliott Sprott: I'll definitely miss the community,

the fun activities, and my friends.

Hadley Thompson: The first day it's warm again and everybody migrates back outside during lunch. It's kind of beautiful. Also the Walkin' Taco.

Yashika Trumata: My awesome friends.

Viktoriya Ustymenko: The people for sure, and also getting to work outside sometimes.

Blakeney Vaughan: Officer Baber, Ms. Harman, Ms. Hepburn, and playing games with all my friends in class.

Marz Watson: The environment and people.

Whitney Werking: Anything but middle school.

Rachel Wheelon: Sleeping in creative writing, doing puzzles during study hall, and repeating everything I say so Coach White can hear me.

Ava Whitener: I will miss the freedom and

acceptance of everyone at SOA. This school has a very welcoming and positive environment that encourages talented people to reach their full potential.

Charlotte Whitley: I will miss hanging out with my friends, bothering my favorite teachers, talking to Ms. Robbi, (also sleeping on the art room couch + stealing five sodas at our senior grub on the green).

Bella-Adore Williams: The freedom, eating outside with the girls, the beauty in nature.

Estee Yu: I'll miss the lunchtime conversations and practice room "practice" sessions with the friends I've grown so used to having around me.

Lillian Zimmerman: I will probably miss being able to draw for an hour and thirty minutes a day. In college I am planning to pursue science so I likely won't do art as much. However, I will

Do you have any advice for underclassmen?

Josie Barrineau: Do not fill your schedule with a lot of AP classes unless you have time outside of school to study. Also, take classes that interest you, ones you would want to study in the future beyond high school.

Riley Brockman: This is the perfect time to branch out! Try everything and try your best.

Annika Baren: Don't take AP Stats senior year if you're not a math person. It's a fun class but a lot of work!

Julia Bates: Appreciate your friends! In a few years, you will all follow different paths, so make the most of being with them before life gets complicated.

Bryce Beasley: Whether it's your major, a hobby, friendships, or whatever you feel passionate about, find something that gets you out of bed every morning that you can pour your whole heart into.

Kennedy Colie: Take a study hall. It is so much easier to balance extracurriculars and school with a study hall. After I was diagnosed with epilepsy, I needed more sleep, so I got a study hall to do my homework instead of doing it at 10 PM when I got home from my activities. It is so healthy to not stress over school when school is over.

Mary Kate Colvin: Take naps. You can't do your best work if you don't have enough sleep.

Bryce Beasley: Whether it's your major, a hobby, friendships, or whatever you feel passionate about, find something that gets you out of bed every morning that you can pour your whole heart into.

Amelia Counts: Don't try to be bubba, you go to art school, ur not tuff lil bro.

Ella Cutaia: Be spontaneous and don't waste your time. If you hesitate to do something, don't. Just do it and you'll have the best high school experience of your life. GO OUT AND DO EVERYTHING!!

Luciano Cusatis: Take Journalism. *Applause* is

a lot of fun!

Reilly Dukes: Comparison is the thief of joy. Be who you are; you are enough.

Madi Deaton: Try not to stress about senior year. Just make sure you get the work done first, then have fun!



Audra Elm: Don't second guess yourself. Follow your own dreams, take the classes you're interested in, and remember that you don't have to listen to what everyone else is telling you to do. You know yourself best. (Also don't try to skip Dr. Cusatis's class. He might be out in the parking lot getting

something from his truck and catch you walking out the door.)

Lila Elm: Make the most out of the arts and music opportunities SOA offers for you.

Micaiah Fagan: Keep your head up, never quit, and always, ALWAYS be kind. It'll take you so far.

Madie Fletcher: Get involved as much as you can. Start a club, go to Magnet football games, join a cult- in four years, you will regret what you didn't do more than you regret what you've done. Also, it's easier to ask forgiveness than permission ;)

Donte Foxworth: It's ok to challenge yourself, but don't make your life stressful.

Jordyn Goodman: Don't skip out on things just because you don't think they'll be fun. Some of my most precious memories from the past four years are from events I didn't want to go to but went anyway.

Nathaniel Green: Come to school, do your work, and serve.

Grey Harlos: Don't be a dingus.

Ayla Hollar: Life goes on, people change, ideas shift, but what matters the most is how you carry yourself through these moments. Everything will work out in the end, and if it hasn't worked out, then it's not the end.

Sasha Kagan: Do not be afraid to be social and be kind to everyone.

Mikey Kardell: Challenge yourself, but don't overextend yourself. Take the time to care for yourself.

Elyse Lang: Enjoy every second of your senior year, it flies by so fast.

Kate Largent: Pursue the artistic projects you're excited about. The more heart and passion you put into your work, the more beautiful it will be. Plus, it's more fun that way!

Do you have any advice for underclassmen?

Addy Lawrence: Don't get involved with drama.
Maddie Leluc: Get off your phone and spend time outside!

Anna Grace Leshner: Don't take yourself too seriously!! I know it's cliché, but getting criticised or judged will not be the worst thing to happen to you. Be careful what you say; be honest, and stay true to whatever it is you believe in. And love. Love with all your heart.

Abigail Manley: Stand up for yourself and make friends.

Jack Mears: Keep trying. I know everyone says "don't give up," but it's true. Once you find what motivates you, keep using that to fuel your passion for your major and your goals. Growth takes time, and every experience helps you improve.

Josie Meloeny: Always be open to new opportunities and experiences.

Shelby Miller: Don't take Anatomy in your senior year....

Kynisha Gladden-Middleton: Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone. Do that crazy thing with your hair; experiment with your style; find who YOU are. Before a big performance or a new experience, remember that you are growing. It's just new to you, it doesn't mean you can't do it.

Rex Mincey: Baby, sloowwww downnn. You have plenty of time to larp, but for now? Let yourself be free, accept yourself in all forms, and choose to love yourself even if it doesn't make sense. It's not natural, it's intentional.

Sara Mojica Supelano: Please choose your peace instead of extreme stressing.

Abbey Morea: Be appreciative of the things you do your senior year; they will probably be the firsts of them. Do not slack your senior year; this is the time you have the most work to do, and it's not academically.

Mathis Morse: Give up if you hate something; don't suffer.

Kylah Munoz: Stop worrying so much about your appearance and what people think of you. As I have gotten older, I have come to realize that everyone is constantly too worried about themselves to even think about you.

Suzie Nordoff: Take advantage of every opportunity, even small things. You end up having the most fun and making the most memories from the spontaneous little things you do.

Emma Norton: It's so important to have a balance between school and the other aspects of your life. Don't overload yourself so much that you miss out on the fun moments of your life, because that's what's going to matter more, not what you got on your math test. But definitely still study.

Nicko Palihan: Don't rely on motivation to get things done. This was definitely one of the most important things I learned during my time at SOA. Discipline is so important in succeeding and

accomplishing your goals. Motivation will only get you so far. Discipline will get you even further.

Reagan Passantino: Fun fact, in my experience, private colleges give you a lot more scholarship money than state or public colleges! Don't sleep on them y'all!

Aedyn Pawlyk: Learn how to manage your time early and not procrastinate. The earlier you do this, the more successful you will be.

Ruby Reddington: Don't wait to do things because you're scared, just do them!

Ava Reynolds: Work hard in your classes, but don't let them control your life. Have fun and live your life to the fullest. You are only in high school once, so make it the best. Care about your grades because they are important, especially for getting into your colleges, but also live your life.

Jaidon Richardson: Do not isolate yourself from your friends; they are there to listen and care for you.



Milo Robbins: Be friendly with everyone you meet, because you never know what could be going on in the lives of people around you.

Izzy Saladin: Don't take everything so seriously and enjoy as much as you can!

Evelyn Sanchez: Use one binder for all your A-day classes and one for all your B-day classes—don't bother with individual ones for each class.

Nicholas King: Sometimes it's okay to not take everything seriously, and to just have fun.

Sadie Scozzaro: Don't stress out about anything too much, especially not school. Life is supposed

to be fun, so don't worry too much over the little things.

Kylie Sessions: Don't ever try to rush senior year, it goes way faster than you expect.

Ava Simancas: Whoever tells you senior year is the easiest year is wrong. It is just as hard as junior year but with more fun events. I know senioritis is inevitable but, do not let it swallow you whole. What people never tell you is that universities can have the choice to take back their offer letter from you if your grades slip. Be on top of your work. Do. Not. Slack. Off. :)

Maren Spangler: My advice for underclassmen would be to really make the most out of high school. It can be difficult sometimes, but it goes by quicker than you would think.

Elliott Sprott: Have fun and make some amazing memories, but remember to stay focused. Also, don't start any drama with your friends. Trust me, it's not worth it.

Hadley Thompson: Be proud of who you are, and surround yourself with people who make you better. Never stop standing up for things that matter to you. Don't tolerate hate, and be the change you want to see in the world. And never regret loving hard. Also collect excused late passes/tickets. You'll never know when they come in handy.

Yashika Trumata: Lock in extra hard during junior year.

Viktoriya Ustymenko: Four years will seem like a lifetime, but it'll be over eventually, and once you're a senior things get pretty good.

Blakeney Vaughan: You HAVE to have guts to go into fashion. Nobody is going to stand up for you when your boss is mean, and you get yelled at and criticized.

Marz Watson: Beware of junior year. Just do your work.

Whitney Werking: Make your senior year as chill as possible.

Rachel Wheelon: Enjoy senior year, but don't expect it to be easy-going. You need to keep your motivation high and get your work done.

Ava Whitener: Everything you do should be done in moderation.

Charlotte Whitley: On the academic side: do your work as soon as you get it so you do not get overwhelmed as it piles on (especially if you're taking multiple APs). On the major side: Make art that you are excited and passionate about. It always makes me sad to see kids who are making art just to get the grade. We are artists! Create what makes you feel fulfilled.

Estee Yu: Don't let high school be daunting. You'll be just fine!

Lillian Zimmerman: Balance what you are supposed to do with what you want to do.

What are your plans after graduation?

Josie Barrineau: My plans are to attend the College of Charleston for Biology hoping to become a Physicians Assistant. I would also love to keep music in my life by either joining a band or teaching younger kids piano.

Riley Brockman: I'm heading to Northeastern University in Boston to study Video Game Design!

Annika Baran: I'm going to UNC Chapel Hill, I'm unsure what I'll major in, but in the second semester I'm studying abroad in Granada, Spain!

Julia Bates: To major in biology at Clemson University and go to a Physician's Assistant school post-grad.

Bryce Beasley: This fall, I'll be attending Coastal Carolina University to earn my bachelor of fine arts in musical theater. I hope to eventually enter the industry and become a working actor.

Jenna Clafiore: Go to college to become an accountant (and get rich).

Kennedy Colie: I am going to the University of South Carolina for aerospace engineering.

Mary Kate Colvin: I'm going to Clemson and majoring in Animal and Veterinary Science.

Amelia Counts: Probably dropping out of art school.

Ella Cutaia: I will be traveling all summer. I am going on a two week road trip with my boyfriend, and our final stop is the Shenandoah River. Then I am going to New Orleans with Audra and Lila, and we're stopping in Alabama to see Jesse Welles. I'm also

traveling to Long Island. At the end of summer, I am going to Western Carolina University to major in art education, and I will be rooming with my best friend Suzie Nordhoff! We can't wait to live in the mountains of North Carolina.

Luciano Cusatis: I will be studying Civil Engineering at the University of South Carolina while also becoming the world's greatest ping-pong player.

Reilly Dukes: I'm attending Roosevelt University's Chicago College of Performing Arts for a BFA in Acting.

Madi Deaton: I'm going to the University of Kentucky for Classical Vocal Performance!

Audra Elm: Moving to Nashville, Tennessee, and writing songs.

Lila Elm: Starting in Fall of 2026, I will be

attending Belmont University in Nashville and majoring in Music Business.

Micaiah Fagan: I plan to attend Winthrop and major in psychology and continue to further my education until I receive my PhD and become a psychiatrist.

Madie Fletcher: I will be attending Clemson University, majoring in biochemistry and minoring in child development on the pre-dental track.

Donte Foxworth: I plan to go into the film industry to create movies and shows that can make people happy.

Jordyn Goodman: A summer full of friends and family before college, making the most of the time we have left together! I would also like to continue to do theatre for as long as possible, so I'm sure I'll do all kinds of auditions. And who knows, maybe I'll book something!

Elyse Lang: I'm studying International Relations at the University of Toronto. I hope to go into Foreign Service or work as a U.S. Ambassador!

Kate Largent: I'm headed to Converse University in the fall. I'll be majoring in Musical Theatre. I hope to become a professional actress one day, and I certainly plan on writing more books!

Addy Lawrence: After graduation I plan to go to Cosmetology School and become a hairdresser.

Maddie Leluc: I will be attending Cornell University and majoring in Philosophy with a minor in Near Eastern Studies.

Anna Grace Leshner: I plan on continuing my journey with film at the SCAD Atlanta campus. I hope someday to create something beautiful and bigger than myself.

Abigail Manley: I am attending Simmons University.

Jack Mears: I'll be attending Elon University to study Vocal Performance and Biology. I've connected with an amazing group of faculty members, who I believe will help me continue growing in both science and the performing arts. Career-wise, I hope to pursue something involving my science studies while continuing to audition and perform for productions, so I'll see which of the two paths life takes me.

Josie Meloeny: I plan to spend my first semester studying abroad in Florence, Italy before transferring to the University of Tennessee Knoxville to pursue either architecture or something environmental.

Kynisha Middleton-Gladden: I plan to go to college for elementary education at

Winthrop University! I chose this because I want to be a safe space for children, and also show them that their lives matter. I want to be a part of the career that trains all the future careers and to live to see the lightbulb moments, and that is really rewarding!

Shelby Miller: I'm going to DePaul University for Comedy Arts.

Rex Mincey: I'm gonna go wherever the wind (Clafin University) takes me. I'm going to be a risk-taker (scholar), and a roadrunner (graduate).

Sara Mojica Supelano: I'm going to relax and enjoy my summer, then go to Dominican University in Chicago.

Abbey Morea: I am planning to attend Mercer University and study Neuroscience on a Pre-Med Track.



Nathaniel Green: To continue to be a student and help the world become a better place

Grey Harlos: To stop jestermassing and ascend from a bottom-tier foie to a level 5 stud.

Will Henrickson: Travel this summer, climb, go to Clemson in the fall for engineering, chase the bag.

Ayla Hollar: I plan to earn a degree in either History or Government from Wofford College so that I can one day work in archives and preservation!

Sasha Kagan: I want to live in a big city and travel the world.

Mikey Kardell: I will be attending Georgetown University and majoring in chemistry. After that, I might go to medical school, or I might not. We'll see where life takes me.

What are your plans after graduation?

Mathis Morse: I'm going to DePaul for playwriting

Kylah Munoz: I plan to attend Clemson University as a business major with a focus in finance. After college I plan to move back to the Charleston area because I have fallen in love with the city and genuinely can't see myself living anywhere else. I also have two younger brothers that I want to watch grow up, so I will be staying in Charleston!

Suzie Nordoff: I plan to go to Western Carolina University and major in interior design. I don't know what I want my future and career to look like quite yet, but I want to include my art into it. I hope to be a sort of designer, and input my own style of craft into my work. I also want to live in a pretty area. I'm excited to live in the mountains in college, and will most likely stay there for a while.

Emma Norton: I am going to Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts and double majoring in Psychology and American Sign Language.

Nicko Palihan: I plan on double majoring in Songwriting and Audio Engineering Technology at Belmont University and minoring in Music Voice. But even further down, I want to travel around the world as much as possible and visit my family in the Philippines again.

Reagan Passantino: I will be attending North Central College in Naperville, Illinois. I plan to receive both my bachelor and masters degrees from NCC and go into Occupational Therapy.

Aedyn Pawlyk: Going to USC and study Sports Management

Ruby Reddington: Work a lot and have fun!!!!

Ava Reynolds: I am going to the University of South Carolina for Nursing. I plan to work at MUSC after I graduate nursing school.

Jaidon Richardson: I plan to attend Clemson University.

Milo Robbins: I am moving back to California where I used to live and studying music technology in College. I hope that after I finish, I can use my

skills to incorporate myself more into the music scene by making beats and recording songs.

Izzy Saladin: I plan to travel the world as much as possible and eventually become a Nurse Anesthetist!



Evelyn Sanchez: I'm going to Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT.

Nicholas King: I am going to New York University to study Acting.

Sadie Scozzaro: I am going to Western Carolina University for Natural Resource Conservation and Emergency Disaster Management.

Kylie Sessions: I plan to go to USC for nursing and study anesthesiology, then move to St. Augustine, Florida and start a family!

Ava Simancas: Attending the University of South

Carolina in the fall to major in Journalism. I'd like to work for a local news network and eventually make my way up to something internationally viewed.

Maren Spangler: I plan to have an amazing summer with my friends and parents before heading up to DC's George Washington University. I plan to study Social Justice and International Affairs with a minor in Creative Writing!

Elliott Sprott: I will be attending Clemson University for nursing.

Hadley Thompson: I am attending New York University to hopefully get my Bachelors of Science in Communicative Disorders. I am going to live a very happy and fulfilling life in New York!

Yashika Trumata: Go to USC for business and maybe transfer to some college in New York.

Viktoriya Ustymenko: Clemson!

Blakeney Vaughan: I'm going to SCAD! I want to travel with whatever company I'm with in the future.

Marz Watson: After graduation I am attending Norfolk State University and majoring in graphic design.

Whitney Werking: Studying interior design and creating spaces that make people happy.

Rachel Wheelon: After graduation, I will be attending Clemson University Honors College with a major in Psychology on a pre-Occupational Therapy track.

Ava Whitener: After graduation, I plan to attend Lynn Conservatory of Music where I will study Violin Performance with Professor Andrès Cárdenes.

Charlotte Whitley: I will be off to Rhode Island School of Design! Freshman year is a foundational year, so my major will be picked in sophomore year, but I am currently debating between Animation and Illustration. We'll see what wins out or if I go in a completely different direction!

Bella-Adore Williams: Go to Winthrop University, get two degrees in five years.

Estee Yu: I am going to the University of South

What was your most memorable moment at SOA?

Annika Baran: Getting smacked with the admin building door by Mathis Morse and getting a massive black eye that looked like really bad eyeshadow.

Josie Barrineau: My most memorable moment at SOA was my sixth grade piano recital. I remember how scared I was because it was my first concert. I was playing a duet with my friend, and I just completely stopped playing in the middle of the song. I was so scared at the time, but now it is a funny memory.

Julia Bates: Performing in *Phantom of the Opera* during my freshman year. It was amazing to experience firsthand so many people coming

together for the production, and how rewarding it was to pull off.

Bryce Beasley: Catching the "Londonese Plague" on SOA Theatre's trip to London

Riley Brockman: Either competing with the amazing people on SOA's Mock Trial Team or publishing my senior thesis!

Jenna Clafiore: Junior year prom.

Kennedy Colie: Probably when I won prom queen.

Mary Kate Colvin: Traveling to Ireland and exploring the various cultures and places we visited.

Amelia Counts: Watching Audra Elm fall down

the stairs.

Ella Cutaia: Definitely the end of eighth grade. I made all of my lifelong friends at that time, and I truly found myself.

Luciano Cusatis: The Strings field trips, especially the one to San Francisco this year which I'll never forget.

Reilly Dukes: Completing my senior thesis was the most memorable and fulfilling moment of my life so far. I felt like all the work I've put in for the past seven years had led up to that moment, and it couldn't have been better.

Madi Deaton: Performing as Mother Abbess in *The Sound of Music* during my junior year.

What was your most memorable moment at SOA?

Audra Elm: Deciding to skip class to go to NYC with Ella for a day.

Lila Elm: The Strings' trips over the years, specifically this year's trip to San Francisco. Getting to go to the Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz, Chinatown, and the National Orchestra Festival with my best friends was incredible.

Micaiah Fagan: I have many memorable moments at SOA, but the one that continues to stand out to me is the last fashion show, more specifically the senior designer finale. I hold the fashion department near and dear to my heart, and it was a very emotional and important moment in my high school career. I will never forget the endless support extended to me from Ms. Donna as well as my sweet friends and sisters in the fashion department.

Madie Fletcher: I will always remember watching Addie Szymkowicz walk the stage last year, sobbing together when she came outside after graduating high school.

Donte Foxworth: I don't have just one, but I would say, my band trips were definitely memorable.

Jordyn Goodman: Every performance has such a special place in my heart ... even if it wasn't my favorite. With each show I have so many memories, it's hard to pick just one! One of the most memorable moments was when we were performing for senior thesis. I was in Reilly's show and I was wearing a robe. My character was a bit rough around the edges so she sat with her legs open and when I went to sit the entire audience laughed. I was sitting there completely clueless

just staring at Nicholas, trying to keep the scene going. I looked out to my friends in the audience and they were just snickering. I didn't realize until someone told me when I got off stage but because of the robe no one could see my shorts underneath, and it totally looked like a flashed the whole audience.

Nathaniel Green: It's the small things that I most enjoyed.

Grey Harlos: The Annie Jenkins Diss Track.

Will Henrickson: My most memorable moment at SOA was our trip to the Smoky Mountains in my sophomore year where we hiked the Appalachian trail.

Ayla Hollar: Acting out scenes from Hamlet in AP Literature, and also getting to watch my classmates make really fun creative choices. I also

loved Pecha Kutcha presentations in AP Lang because I got to see all the fun topics my classmates were researching and writing about!

Sasha Kagan: My most memorable moment at SOA was probably the first ever concert I performed in. I was nervous, but I did well, and my parents brought me flowers afterwards. I felt appreciated, and I was proud to have been able to experience that opportunity.

Mikey Kardell: Getting to perform the *Holiday Spectacular* for the first time. And the last time. I may have gotten a bit emotional for that one.

Elyse Lang: Definitely performing in *The Sound of Music*! I loved my role, the music, and the

moments, but the best ones are when I forget I'm in school. I love having a safe environment to just be. Whether I'm upset or excited or down or anything, I know there's always somewhere to go and someone to talk to and that's my favorite part.

Abigail Manley: When I came out as transgender at school, my sophomore year.

Jack Mears: One of my most memorable moments was freshman year during the first sitzprobe for *The Phantom of the Opera*. Hearing the orchestra and cast come together for the first time was such an unforgettable experience and really made me realize how special SOA is.

Josie Meloeny: My most memorable moment at SOA was my Senior Thesis Art Show, because all of my friends and family came and supported me as well as all the other senior visual artists!

Shelby Miller: Having code names for all the old seniors when we were freshmen, and thinking that they found out about them, so we changed them every week.

Abigail Morea: My most memorable moment at SOA is probably my freshman year of high school. My best friends were upper classmen, and it was a peak year for symphony. Getting to play in *The Phantom of the Opera* has got to be the top moment in my high school years.

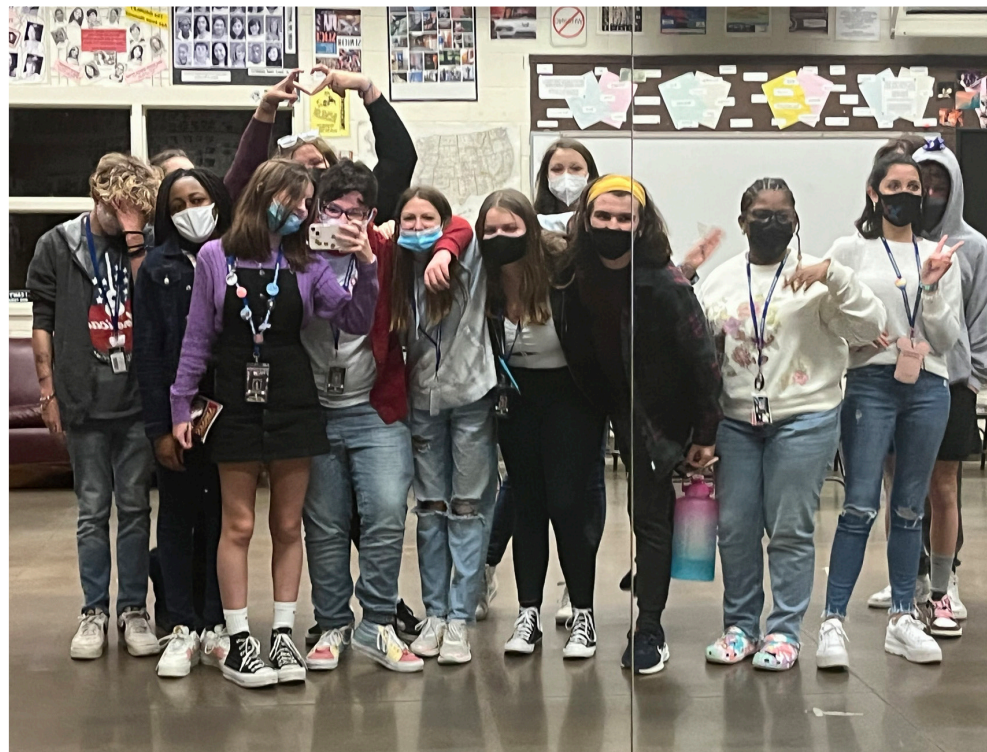
Kynisha Middleton-Gladden: My most memorable moment at SOA ranges from a couple of events, but stems from the same action. This fully began with me auditioning to sing at Jump, Jive, and Wail, and getting to sing there. That led to me getting recruited by the people who were a part of D.

Cusatis' yearly show. Then, singing and dancing in front of the SOA middle AND high school at the Black History Month Jamboree! These were amazing experiences, all because I finally broke out my singing shell.

Rex Mincey: The BSU Jamborees. I loved singing with my non-blood-related cousins. (Erin, Zion, Shamah, Jahaire, Greg, etc.) And *Music Down In My Soul* when I danced with Ruby in her bad blonde, bad built, stiff, synthetic wig she had to wear because her pink bright hair was too much for the teachers to handle.

Sara Mojica Supelano: Walking down the runway in the fashion show this year.

Mathis Morse: My most memorable moment at SOA is all the times I have spit on people during scenes. I both say it and spray it.



connections I made with the people in my major.

Kate Largent: I have experienced so many memorable moments at SOA, but rehearsals for my senior thesis performance were especially memorable. I vividly recall the joy of sitting in a circle with my friends, our voices singing my lyrics in unison. It was so surreal to hear them singing something I wrote! It was so gratifying to see my hard work pay off in such a beautiful way.

Addy Lawrence: My most memorable moment at SOA is getting ready for the fashion show with all of my models.

Maddie Leluc: Walking into the high school building my sophomore year and getting ID'd at the door by a "bouncer" because the senior prank was a nightclub.

Anna Grace Lesher: I'm not good with specific

What was your most memorable moment at SOA?

Kylah Munoz: My MOST memorable moment at SOA was during my second block Algebra 1 class in ninth grade. The deafening sound of my pants ripping filled the classroom, and my face turned bright red from embarrassment. A massive tear from the back belt loops of my jeans all the way down to the back of my knee. The most humiliating memorable moment of my high school experience ever.

Suzie Nordoff: The visual arts Italy trip one summer. It was SO fun, and such a great experience, and I became very close with a couple of girls, which made the trip even better.

Emma Norton: The New York trip that I went on with vocal in my junior year was the most fun school trip I had ever been on. It was one of the only trips that we went on where we didn't do any formal concerts or singing, but got to fully relax and spend time with each other. We had a lot of independence and free time on this trip, and I'll always cherish the moments I spent wandering the streets of New York City with my best friends.

Nicko Palihan: My most memorable moment at SOA was when I was in sixth grade. School had just started, and I didn't know anyone. I came

from Dorchester County and was the only one from my school to join SOA. For the whole first week of school, I sat at the silent lunch table, not knowing it was the silent lunch table. Thinking I was wrong, my science teacher, Ms. Healy, walked up to me and asked why I had been sitting there recently. Long story short, she told me what I would've liked to know before and helped me find my first group of friends to sit with at lunch.

Reagan Passantino: One time Brooklyn Mayberry and I started yanking random stuff out of our backpacks, and it got so out of hand that our entire English class plus our teacher started joining in. Soon the entire table was filled with random trinkets, and that's how we became friends. Kyle is not invited.

Aedyn Pawlyk: The holiday concert at the Gailliard.

Ruby Reddington: When vocal and strings performed *Phantom of the Opera* my freshman year; that's what really got me into music and singing :)

Ava Reynolds: My most memorable moment at SOA would have to be Senior Year Departmental. This was our last time performing with one another after seven years of performing together. We laughed, cried and took so many pictures. This is definitely a memory that I will cherish for the rest of my life. I love my SOA Dance Family.

Jaidon Richardson: My senior thesis for visual arts, because it was when I realized that the people whom I've seen every school day for the past four to seven years will be going their separate ways now.

Milo Robbins: There are so many little moments that race through my mind when I think about my favorite memories here, so it's hard to just give one answer. But I always loved to play the boys volleyball game during powderpuff each year, surrounded by the whole high school cheering us on.



Izzy Saladin: My most memorable moment at SOA was when all the sewers flooded at school, and we all got to go home early because it smelled rank.

Evelyn Sanchez: Either my friends dancing to "Copacabana (At the Copa)" in the scene shop or fighting off a pair of geese on the way to my car.

Nicholas King: The moment I took my bow after the performance of my Senior Thesis. It felt so rewarding as the culmination of seven years of hard work and dedication.

Sadie Scozzaro: Ms. Honeycutt throwing cat toys at Andrew when he fell asleep in class.

Kylie Sessions: Senior Sunrise. It was so sappy sharing the beginning of senior year with everyone that I had grown up with for so many years.

Ava Simancas: When I dropped my salad down the stairs in front of Dr. Cook. Not my best moment.

Maren Spangler: My most memorable moment was my thesis. In my major, we write and publish a book with any theme. I chose a collection of short

stories and poetry about growing up and maturing. It's such a cool experience, and so rewarding to hold the physical book in my hands.

Elliott Sprott: My most memorable moment was going on a cruise for the senior Piano trip. Even though it was my idea, I'm glad everyone else enjoyed it too.

Hadley Thompson: Watching Lisa or Lena food videos in computer science. Every class needs a little more Lisa or Lena.

Yashika Trumata: Every time the teacher forgot to collect homework.

Viktoriya Ustyenko: Getting to go to performances and see how everyone supports each other is really heartwarming.

Blakeney Vaughan: Ordering pizza without Kiera, and "I would die for Riley"

Marz Watson: My most memorable moment at SOA was sitting on the bench every morning with my friends.

Whitney Werking: The bittersweet feeling of finally finishing art senior thesis.

Rachel Wheelon: The day when the plumbing stopped working and they brought in porta potties for everyone to use. They ended up just sending everyone home at nine.

Ava Whitener: When we performed *The Phantom of the Opera*. It was truly a magical experience, and I will

never forget the lasting impact it has had on my life.

Charlotte Whitley: Well there are many memorable moments but a sweet one was a few springs ago. My friends and I sat in the grass in the Pegasus Garden during lunch, chatting, making flower crowns and watching the little goslings!

Bella-Adore Williams: Finishing my senior thesis, Kiss of Life, in October, it wasn't the best thing I've ever done, nor was it the worst thing I'll ever do. But I did it!

Estee Yu: My senior thesis recital was the moment I realized how valuable my time as a piano major has been to me and how glad I am to have spent it with friends.

Lillian Zimmerman: Being a designer for the SOA fashion show. I designed clothes for my mom and sister and I remember feeling very proud when I saw them walk down the runway wearing my outfits. I guess it is very nice to feel accomplished and see the results of your work.

Forever Friends



To the ladies we've watched grow in stature, beauty, intelligence, talent, and grace—you will always have the code to our door.

Love,
The Tuckers.



Shea Tucker

Congratulations, Shea! The curtain is rising on your next adventure—step out and shine like you always do. So proud of you!

XOXO,
Mom, Dad,
Laney, and
Winnie



Madelyn Snider

We know you will do amazing things at West Virginia University! Congratulations, we are so proud of you!

Love,
Mom, Dad &
Bella



Lila Elm and Audra Elm



So proud of you both! You make it all look easy, but it was hard work. Can't wait to see what you two do next.



Kennedy Colie

Fairy Tale Day, when everyone else was a princess, you showed up as the Big Bad Wolf. You're fearless & brilliantly yourself! We love you!

Mama, Padre,
& Maggie



Rayna Perez

Rayna,

We always knew you were a star! Keep shining bright. We love you to the moon and back forever!

Mom, Paul,
Gramma, Papa,
Christy and Redd
Bone.





Abigail Grace Manley

Your passion,
curiosity, and
determination
will
unquestionably
lead to infinite
achievements...
We'll always be
cheering for you!

Love,
Dad, Mom, &
Aidan

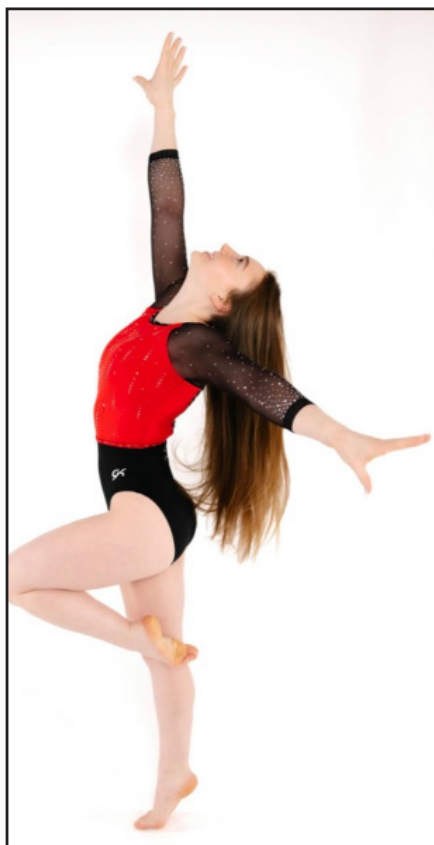


Maren Spangler

Maren, you are
a light in this
world and we are
so proud of you!
We can't wait to
see all that God
has in store for
your future! We
love you!

Mom and Dad





Reese Brittingham

You are an “Inquirer” and “Thinker” who tackles complex problems with creativity- You have gained “Knowledge” across many fields-

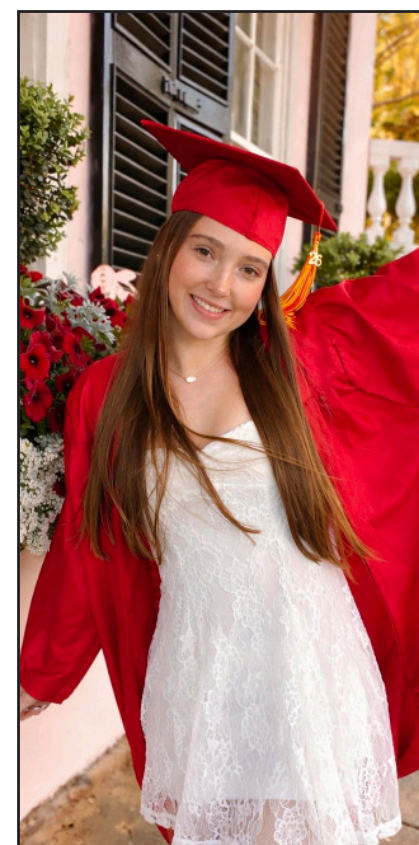
You are a “Communicator” who expresses ideas with confidence and are “Reflective” in all you do-

Through your dedication to service you are “Principled,” “Caring” and “Open-minded” toward others-

In gymnastics, you are a “Risk-taker” who is “Balanced” in mind and body.

We are so proud of you!

Mom, Dad, and Cooper



Estee Yu

Congratulations, Estee!!! We’re so proud of you! It’s been an immense pleasure watching you grow into such a kind, smart, and amazing young woman. Wishing you all the happiness and success!



Viktoriya Ustymenko



Congrats, Vicky! You did it! So proud of you! Keep smiling and keep shining bright in your life always! Great achievement!

Stanton Calev Harrold



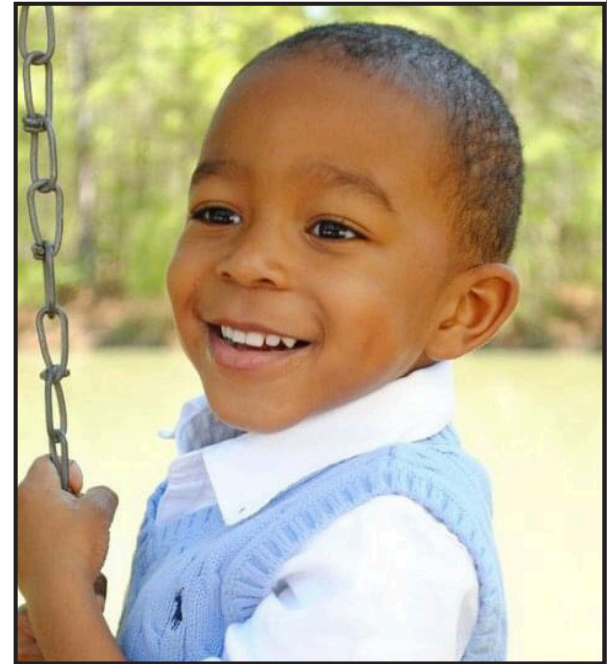
Watching you grow into the young man you are today has been one of the greatest gifts of our lives.

We love your humor—the way you can make us laugh without even trying. We love your deep love for family, your passion for music, the freedom you find in flying, and the peace that surrounds you on or in the water.

As you step into adulthood, our prayer is simple and endless:

that God will protect you, guide you, and walk beside you in every season ahead. May He give you wisdom, courage, and peace as you follow his will and discover your path. We are so proud of you, so grateful for you, and love you more than words could ever say!

Love,
Mom and Dad



Maxim Zakharchyk



Congratulations, Maxim, on your high school graduation! Watching you grow into the talented, kind, creative, and determined young man you are today has been one of the greatest joys of my life. Over the years, I've seen your dedication, resilience, and passion for the things you love, and I could not be more proud of everything you have accomplished.

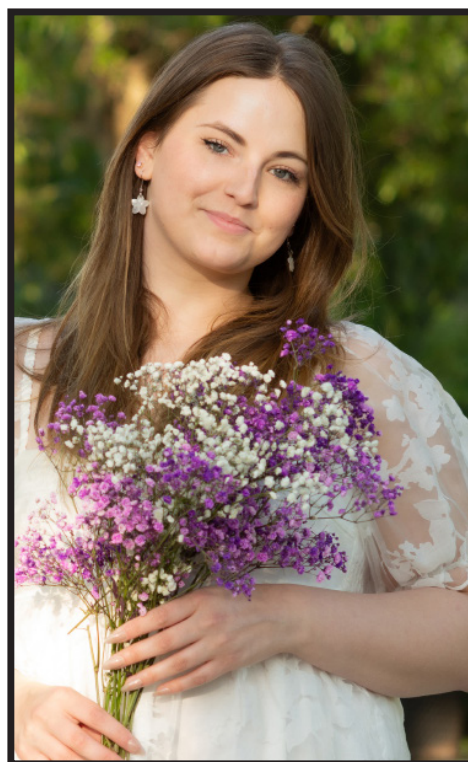
Your family.



Rachel Wheelon

Congratulations, Rachel! We couldn't be more proud of you!

All our love,
Mama, Daddy,
Layla, Liv, &
Wyatt



Blakeney Vaughan



Blakeney,

Never let anyone dim your light. You were born to shine.
Your family loves you and is so proud of you.

XO-
Mom

Sadie Scozzaro



Congratulations!
We are so proud
of the amazing
woman you have
become. You will
shine at WCU!
We love you!

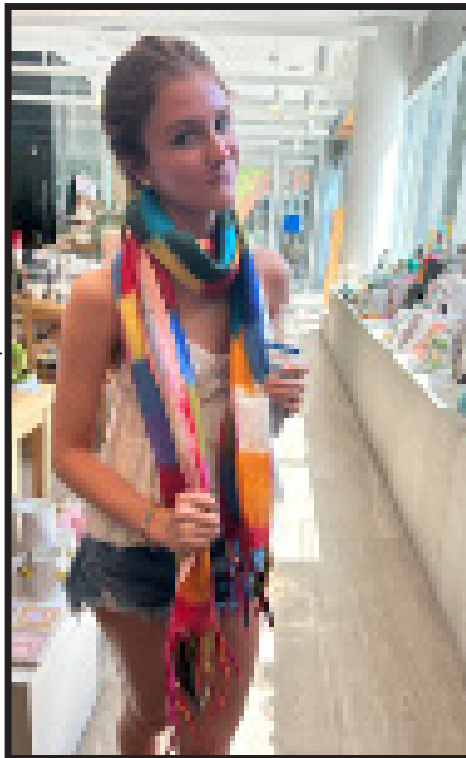
Mom, Dad, Luke
and Grandmommy



Finnley McGlynn

Congratulations,
Finnley Girl!
U.S.C. is one
lucky school to
have you next!
We are so very
proud of you and
can't wait to see
what your future
holds!

Love,
Mom, Dad, and
Halle



Charlotte Whitley



Charlotte, you've
shown incredible
strength and
resilience. We
are so proud of
you and can't
wait to watch
your bright
future unfold.

Love,
Mom and Dad

Dakota Townsend



Dakota,
You are the
perfect gift
from God! The
star that keeps
shining! We
love you!

Love,
Dad & Mom



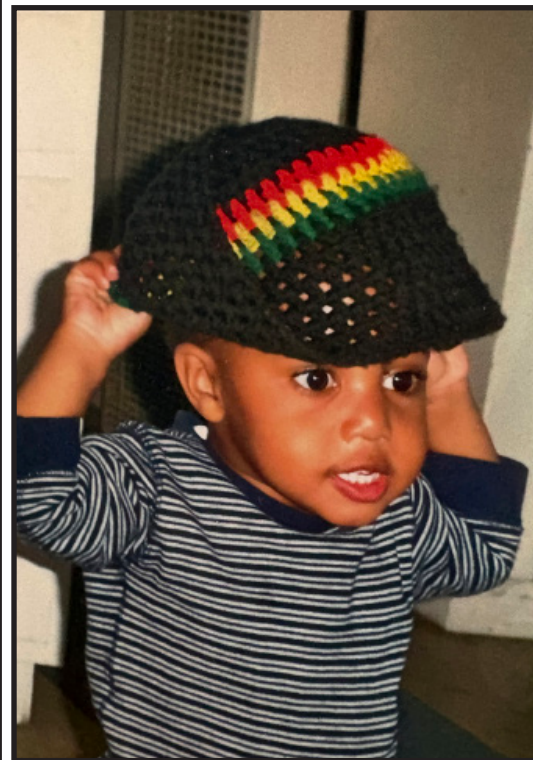
Nicholas Palihan

“May your
heart always
be joyful;
your song
always be
sung.”
Keep chasing
every note of
your dream,
Nicko.

With love,
Mama and
Dad.



Myles Owens-Walker



“One good
thing about
music, when it
hits, you feel
no pain” -Bob
Marley
Hit them with
Music as You
are a Beautiful
Sound



Ava Whitener



Ava, what a gift
you are to us.
You are beautiful
inside and out,
and we know you
will do amazing
things!!

Love,
Mom, Dad, and
Noelle



Julia Bates

Have regular hours
for work and play;
make each day both
useful and pleasant,
and prove that you
understand the worth
of time by employing
it well. Then youth will
be delightful, old age
will bring few regrets,
and life will become a
beautiful success.

We love you,
Mom and Dad



Annika Baran

Congratulations,
Annika! We love
you so much
and are so proud
of you! Thank
you to all of
her wonderful
teachers at SOA!

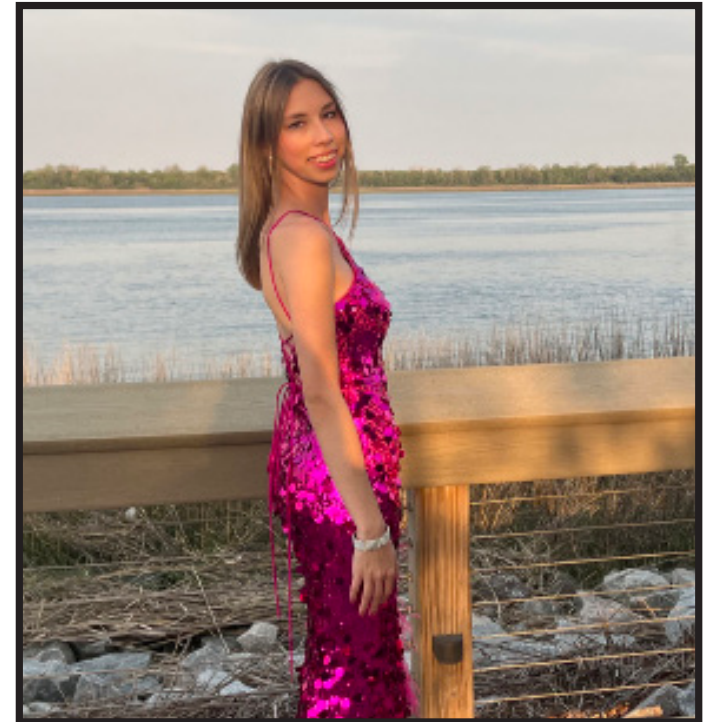
Love,
Mom, Dad, and
Charlotte



Elliott Sprott

We are so incredibly proud of the amazing person you've become. Your determination and unwavering kindness inspires us everyday. We love you!

Mom, Dad &
Emerson



Josie Barrineau

Congratulations, Josie! We are so proud of the beautiful person you are and can't wait to see what your future holds.

God has a plan just for you. Trust in Him for guidance, work hard, and enjoy every moment of the journey.

We love you!
Jeremiah 29:11
XOXOXO,
Mom + Dad



Annabeth Elaine Beam

We are so proud of the young lady you are and all that you have accomplished. Looking forward to what's next!

Love,
Mom & Dad



Evelyn Sanchez



Congratulations,
Evy! We are so
proud of you!

Love,
Xander, Mom and
Dad.



Mary Kate Colvin

*On the Night
You Were Born*
- (y)our first
“book love.”
We couldn’t be
more proud of
“the one and
only ever you.”

Mom and Dad



Reilly Dukes

Congratulations
to my beautiful
daughter. Keep
moving forward
with confidence,
knowing your
family loves
you and stands
behind you
always.

Love,
Daddy



Gwenny Svendsen



You bring light and love. Depth and laughter. You're super smart, and super fun. We are all proud of you!

Micaiah "Papaya" Fagan

Congrats to Caiah Miah, my A-1 since Day 1. By the way, WHERE ARE MY PURPLE SCISSORS?!?!



Madison Fletcher



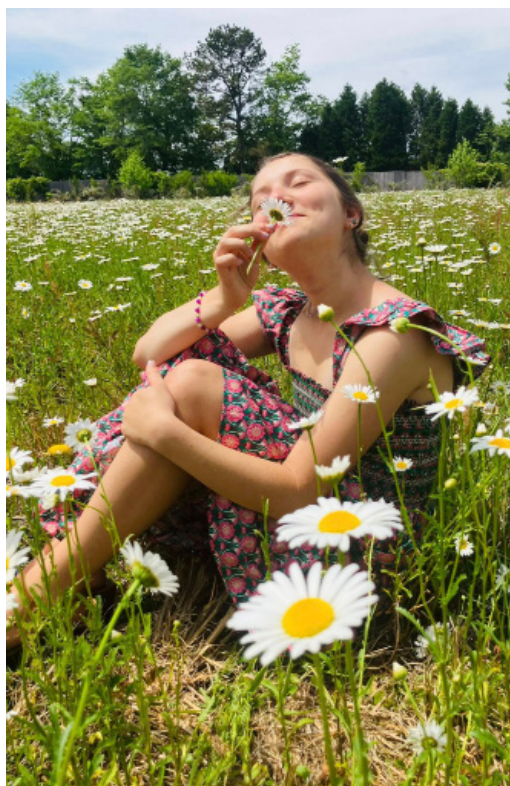
Congratulations, Madison! We couldn't be prouder of you! Your future is bright and your possibilities are endless. Best wishes as you follow your own path. We love you!

Dad & Mom

Lillian Zimmerman

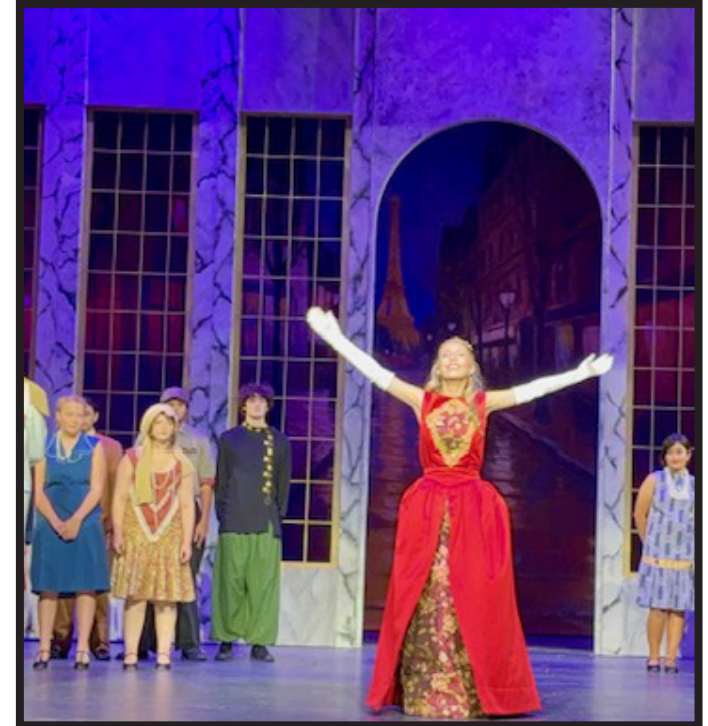
Lillian,
Having you as our daughter
has been the pride and joy of
our lives. We are so proud of
you! We can't wait to see what
lies ahead for you. Keep up the
good work. Always remember
how very much we love you!

Love,
Mama, Daddy, Eliot and Pearl



Gabriella Blumetti

Gabi,
You found the
note!
We're so proud
of you-now go
be fabulous in
Ireland!
We love you!

**Juvon Gilliard**

Juvon, your smile
and laughter
have always been
contagious! Continue
to be impactful
throughout your life.
We're beyond proud
of you!

Dad, Mom, and
Justin



Mia Gonzalez



You did it! You worked, grew, and designed your future. We can't wait to see how NYC inspires you! Keep making your dreams come true!



Ivy Alanna Chanté Brown

Congratulations, Ivy! I am sooooo proud of you! We started from the bottom, now we here! Your future is so bright- never dim your light. You are beautiful, talented, a born leader and unstoppable dancer. California better get ready 1,2,3....

RELEASE 'EM

- Your #1 FAN

Mommy



Emilia Hall

Congratulations, Emilia! It has been a joy having a front row seat to your journey at SOA!

Love -

Mom, Dad + Landon
You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think.

- Winnie the Pooh



Lexia Woods



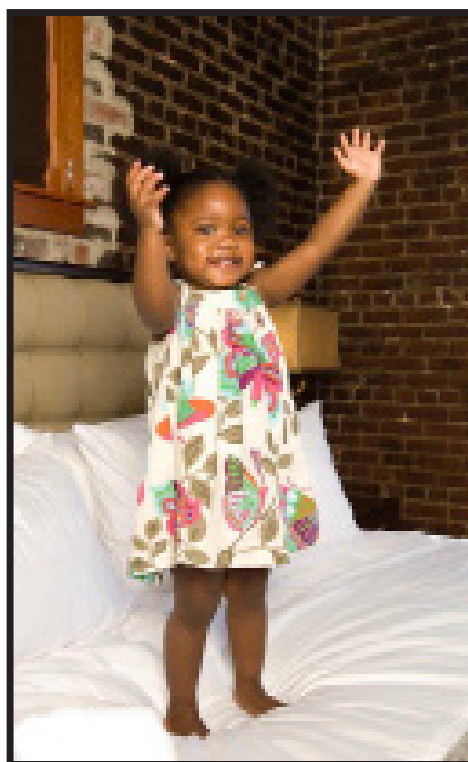
God looked down
from up above
And he picked you
out for me to love
He picked you out
from all the rest
Because he knew
I'd love you the
best.
Congrats, Lex!



Cameron Nichole Hazel

Congratulations
to my amazing
Artist/ Future
Architect! I am
so proud of you
in every way!

Love,
your Mom!



Cameron Nichole Hazel

From the first
time we held this
precious jewel,
we knew we were
holding greatness!
Cammie, keep God
first and you will
be able to reach
heights unknown.

From your Proud
Grandmother





Andrew Blind

Andrew,

We are proud of you! You are loved beyond the moon and stars and back. As this chapter ends and a new one begins in your journey, we pray you succeed in whatever your heart desires. Keep God first and He will direct your path.

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

– Joshua 1:9

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

– Philippians 4:13

We love you SO much!
Mom, Dad, Joshua, Addie,
Nana, Grandpa, & Pop Pop





Abigail Olivia Huss

Throughout the years, you have grown into a passionate musician, an inquisitive, thoughtful, & brilliant student, and most importantly, a kind, caring, and loving young woman. You are so ready to go into the world, and you will make such a significant impact on those around you.

Believe in yourself, ask for help along the way, and never forget how much you are loved.

Go Blue Demons!

Love you,
Mom



Tula Sood

Tula -

You've always been so awesome!! We love you! Rock on!

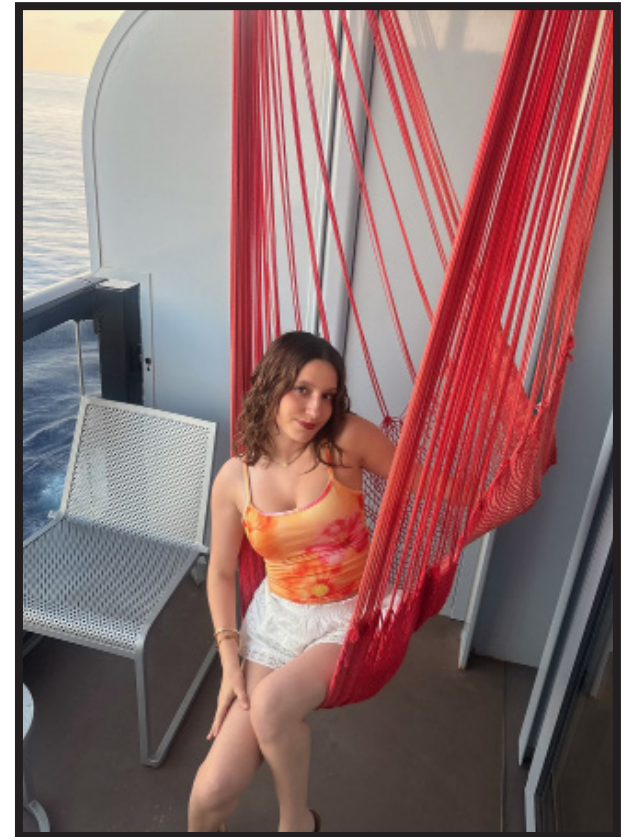




Emma Stavrakis

Congratulations, Emma! We are so proud of you and so excited about your future as a Gamecock and beyond!

Love,
Mommy, Baba, Clara
Anne & Manny

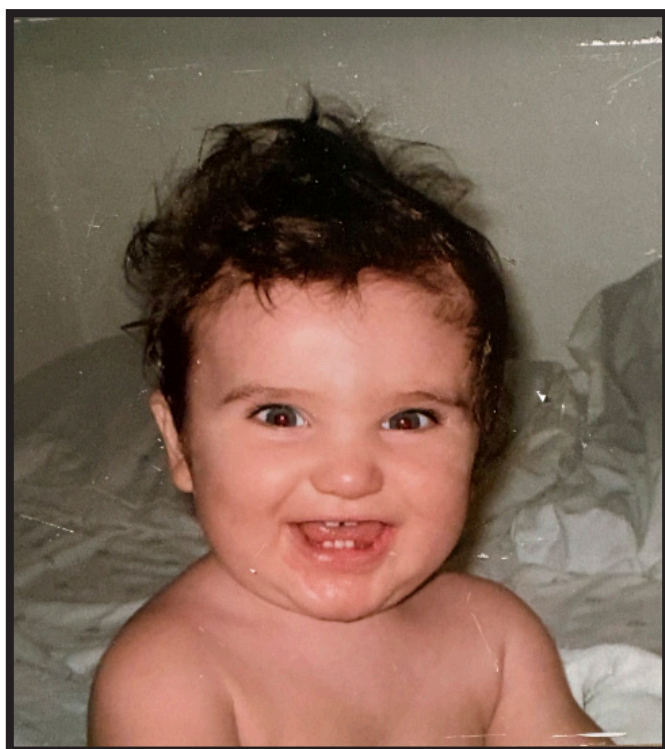


Kynisha Middleton-Gladden

From that little dancing girl to this beautiful, talented, uniquely made young person, who makes me laugh and proud to be your mother. Keep shining and smiling and know that not only does God love you, but I love you too, very much!!



Mathis Morse



Congratulations!
Continue to chase
your dreams. We
love you!

Mom, Dad, and
Denver



Mathis Morse

Mathis heads
to DePaul for
playwriting. His
first play will be
titled *CVS Does
Not Carry Glue*.
We're so proud.

Love,
Your Park Circle
Fam



“Maths” Morse



Maths is my
favorite grown-
up big kid and
the best brother
and dad in the
world. He is on
my good guy
team.

Love,
Irving

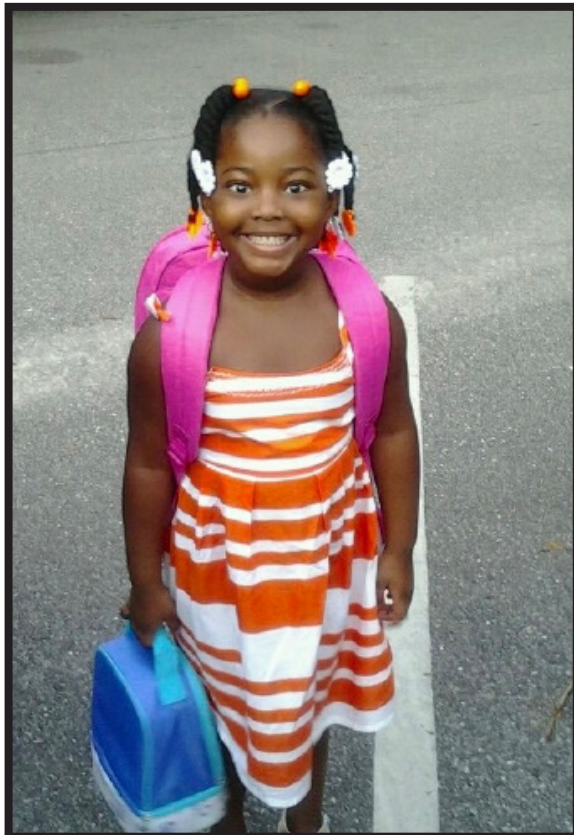


Ruby Reddington

Bravo, Ru! You did it!

What an honor and a joy it is to be your mom, watch you grow, and witness you achieve this milestone. I am incredibly proud of you! Thank you, Ruby, for always being fearless and yourself. Now go on out into this big wide world and break a leg, kiddo!

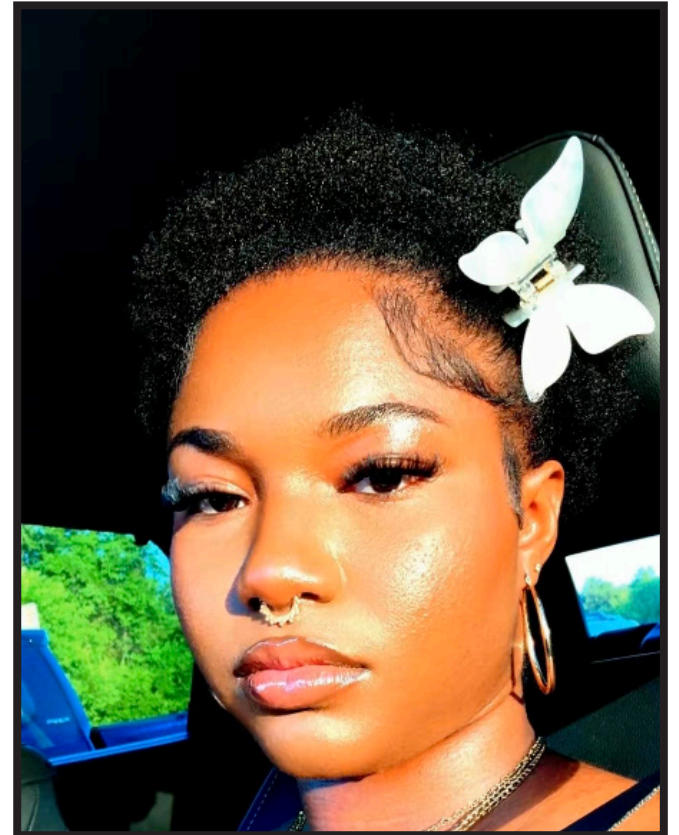
“I’ll love you forever,
I’ll like you for always,
As long as I’m living my baby you’ll be.”
xoxo-Mama



Jaidon Richardson

You traveled the journey from Kindergarten to Senior Year with such grace. Now it’s time to go out into the world and make it your canvas! I love you!!

Love always,
Mom





Jasper Reuter

“I wanna make
a color that no
one else has seen
before. I wanna
be so much
more.”
You did it!

Love,
Mom & Dad



Pia Oronce

Our Dearest Pia,

We are so incredibly proud of you. Watching you grow into the bright, creative, kind-hearted person you are today has been one of the greatest joys of our lives. Your talents are a true gift, and the way you pour your heart into everything you do lights up the people around you —including us, every single day.

Congratulations, sweet Pia. This is just the beginning, and whatever path you choose, we know you'll walk it with the same passion and grace that has carried you here. We'll always be cheering you on, praying for you, and loving you more than words can say.

We love you, Pia. So, so much.

— Mom, Dad, and Kuya





Elliott Martin

Elliott,

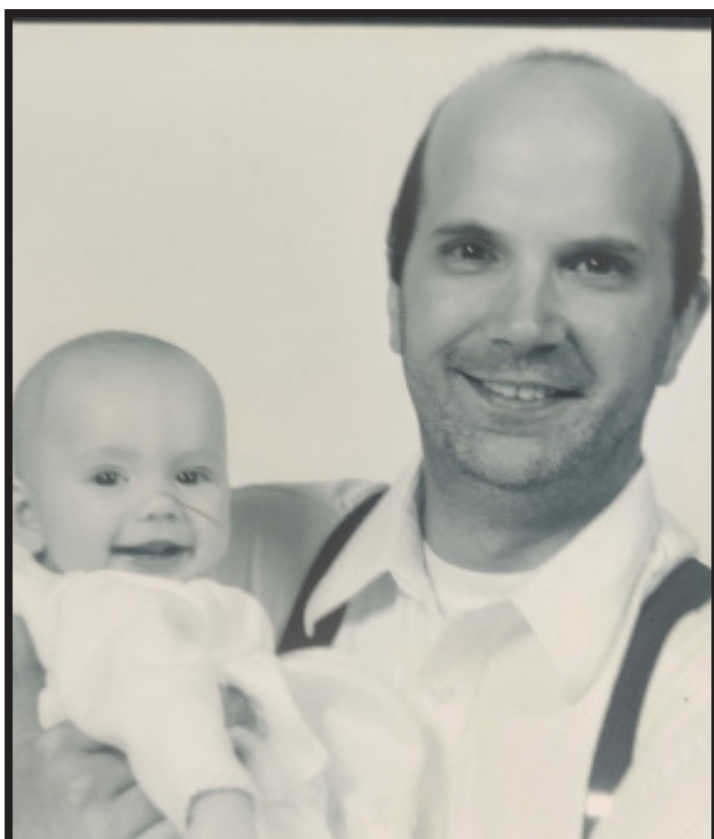
From your first drawings to selling your first artwork to traveling in Cambodia to teaching, we have loved watching your creativity, kindness, and confidence grow year after year. We are so proud of the thoughtful and talented person you have become and cannot wait to see where life takes you next.

“If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.”

~ Henry David Thoreau

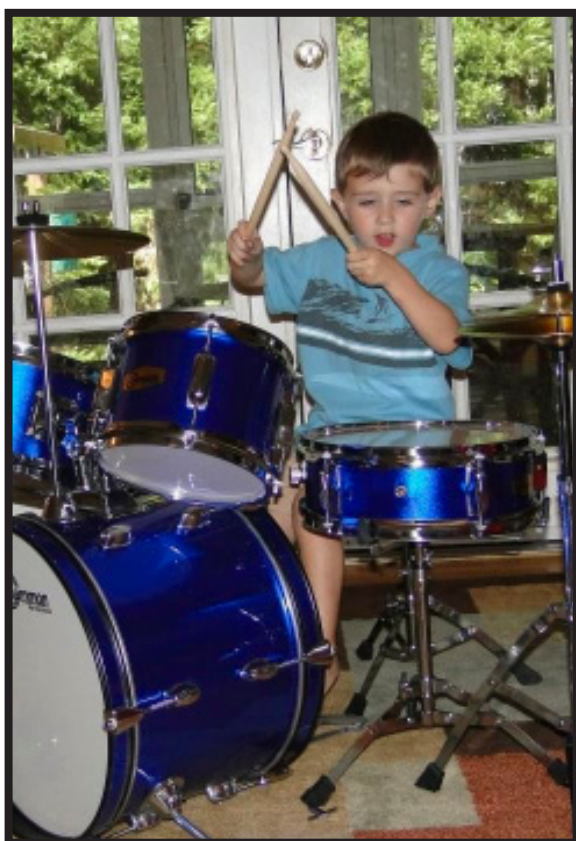
Love,
Mom and Dad, Jean, and
GG





Maggie O'Dell

We are so proud of you!
We know you will be successful in all that you do. Always be closing!



Aedyn Pawlyk

We are so proud of you! We are so excited to watch you flourish in this next chapter of life!

Love,
Mom and Dad





Cameron Lamar Leach

Congratulations, Cameron. This is the day you have been waiting and looking for. We are so proud of you! Remember to keep God first as you work hard to achieve all of your dreams and goals. We love you.

Mom, Dad, sisters and brother



Madison June Deaton

Congratulations, Madison! I am so proud of you and all of your accomplishments. You have brought so much joy to my life. I will always be rooting for you. Continue to follow your dreams!

Love,
Mom





Emma Norton

“Hold on to the memories,
they will hold on to you.”
-Taylor Swift

So many memories still
to be made! We are so
very proud of you and all
you’ve accomplished. This
is just the beginning!

Love,
Mom & Jackie

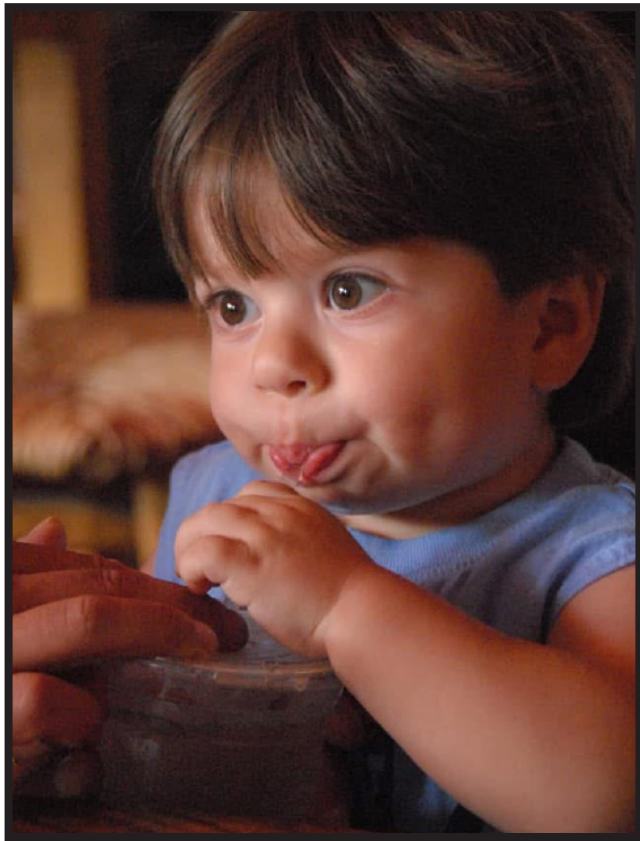


Suzie Nordoff

Your inner radiance
is your greatest
asset.
We are so proud
of who you are
today...Shine on!

Love,
Mom & Dad





Rogelio Martinez III

“Congratulations, Rogis! We are so proud of you. You are such a bright and talented young man. We are so excited for the next chapter of your life. We love you so much.

Love,
Mami, Papi, and
Natalia.



Nicholas “Pickle” King

Congratulations! We are so incredibly proud of you and can’t wait to see all the amazing adventures ahead. From your first day of kindergarten to your senior year, you have continued to grow and excel, and it has been a joy to watch. We are so excited for this next chapter.

We love you to the moon, infinity, and beyond—always!

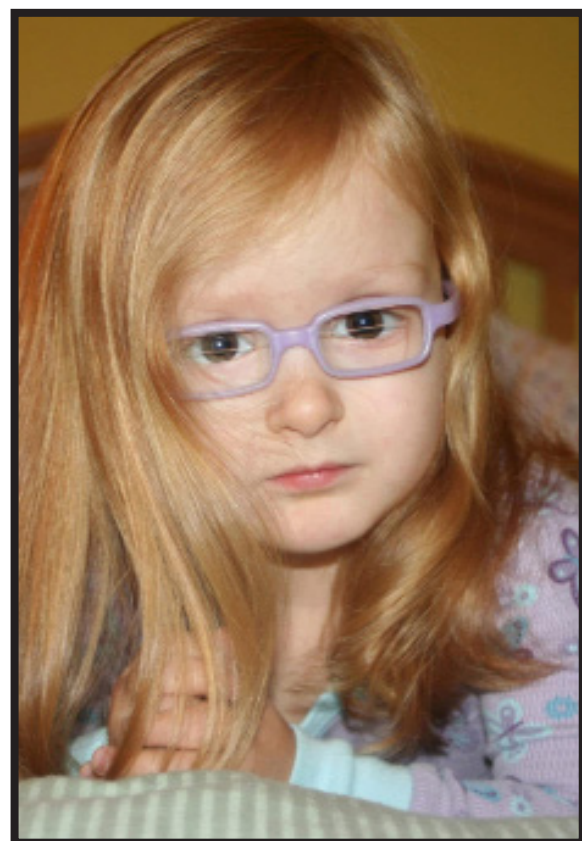
Love always,
Momma, Poppa, Sissy, Lyssa, and
Phillip





Maddie Leluc

Marking each moment
where you are,
Always embracing the
journey afar.
Daring to chase every new
horizon in sight,
Dancing through laughter
with delight.
Inspiring simply by being
true,
Exciting adventures await
for you.



Katherine Largent

We're so proud
of you! Enjoy the
journey as you
write, create, and
do all the things.

Love,
Mom, Dad, and
Maggie





Donté Foxworth

Hey Stark (Atreus aka Boy)

We are very proud of you in all that you've accomplished so far in life. As you navigate the realm of "adulthood" (college, workforce, corporate, family, etc.) Remember to keep God first and he will direct your path.

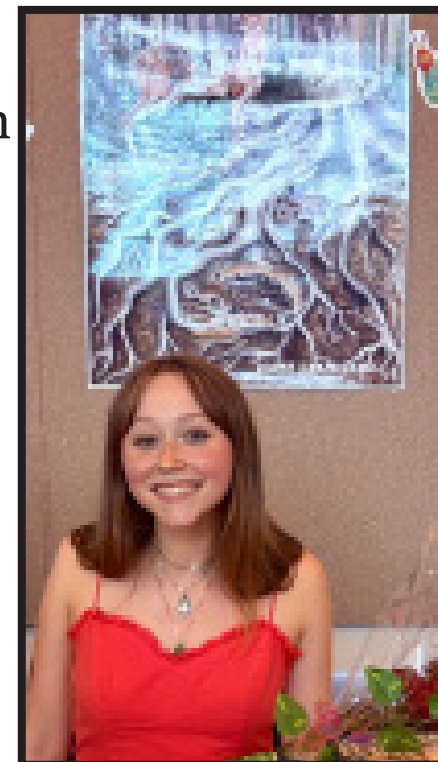
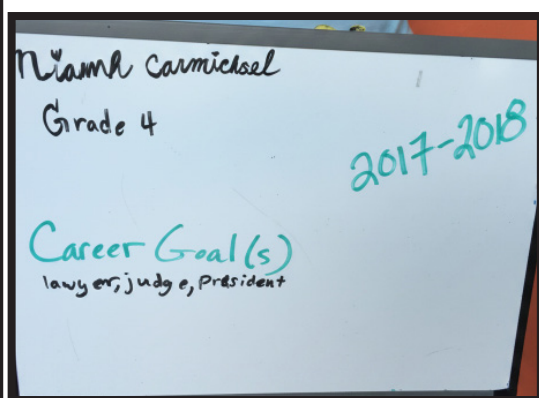
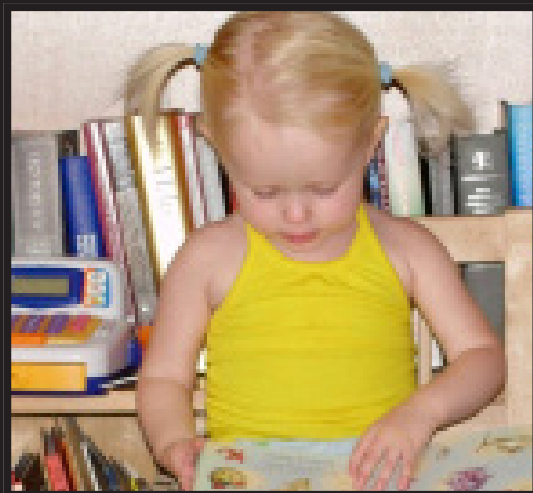


Love,
Mom & Dad

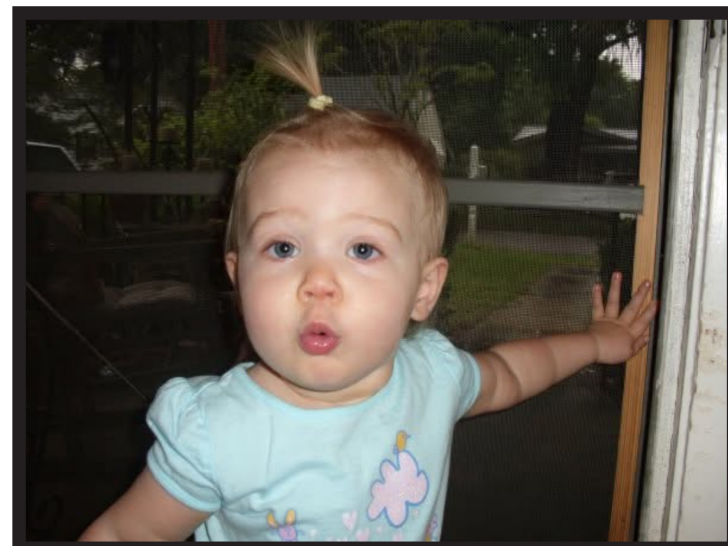


Niamh Carmichael

Dearest Niamhy,
 Onwards, to the next chapter! Stretch your branches skyward, higher and higher, strengthened by the roots of your family's love and support. You've been writing a most magical, astonishing life story, so continue to "Fill your paper with the breathings of your heart" (Wordsworth). We love you so much! Mama, Finn, Aoife (& your angel Da). "Instructions for living a life. Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it." —Mary Oliver



Olive McCoy



We are incredibly proud of the determined, genuine, and delightful person you are. Congratulations on this special milestone! Keep shining your beautiful light, sweet Olive!



Shelby Miller

Shelby,

You have always amazed us with your intelligence, talent, humor, and ability to bring joy to everyone around you. As you graduate high school and head to college to pursue theater and comedy, we are so proud of the passion and courage you bring to your dreams.

Keep making people laugh, keep shining, and never stop being exactly who you are. Your future is bright, and we can't wait to see where your next act takes you.

Love always,
Mom & Dad



Luciano Cusatis

Dear Luciano, Luci, Lu,
We are proud of all you do.
Whether you're playing
Haydn on the cello,
Or singing "My Generation"
by the Who.

You've been an awesome
editor-in-chief,
And you make a mean pizza,
too.

USC and engineering,
a perfect fit for you!

We Love You!

Daddy, Mama, Giovanni,
Annabella, Gemma & Smokey

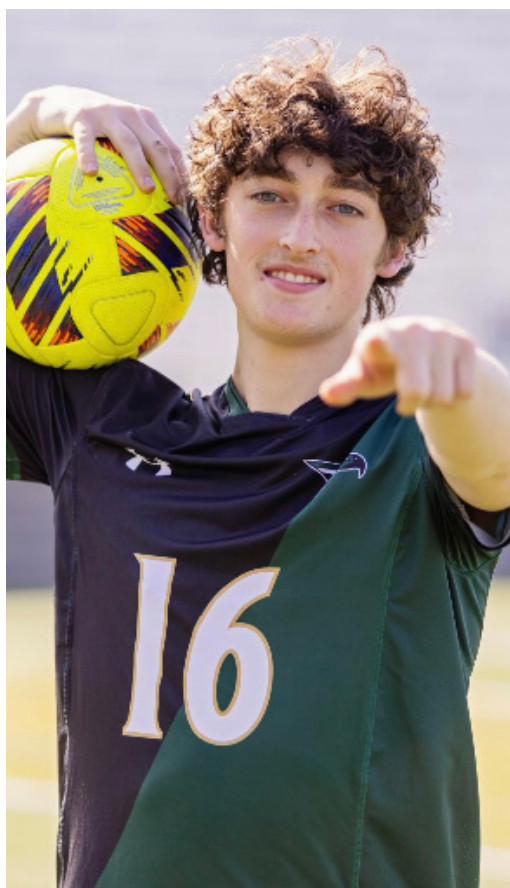


Milo Robbins

Milo,

We are so proud of the incredible young man that you have become! You're so handsome, talented, genuine, and skilled at so many things. We marvel at your abilities in music, soccer, and just being a wonderful human to everyone. Congratulations!

Love,
Dad and Mom



Ella Maestas

You did it,
Ella! You're
so determined
and we have
no doubt that
you'll make your
dreams come
true!

Love,
Mom, Dad,
Ruby and Lil



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LEON

STAVRINAKIS

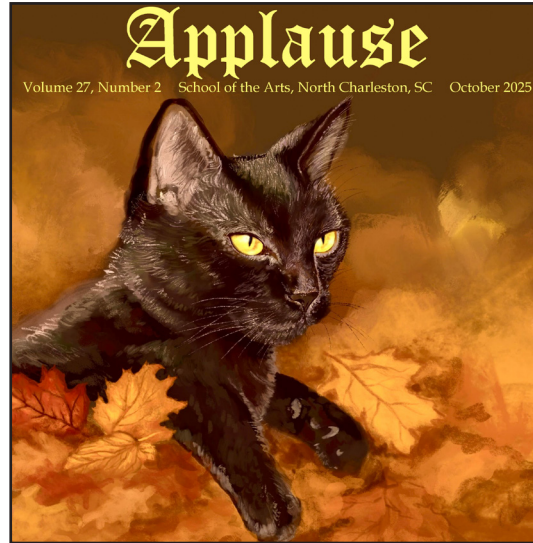
SOUTH CAROLINA STATE HOUSE



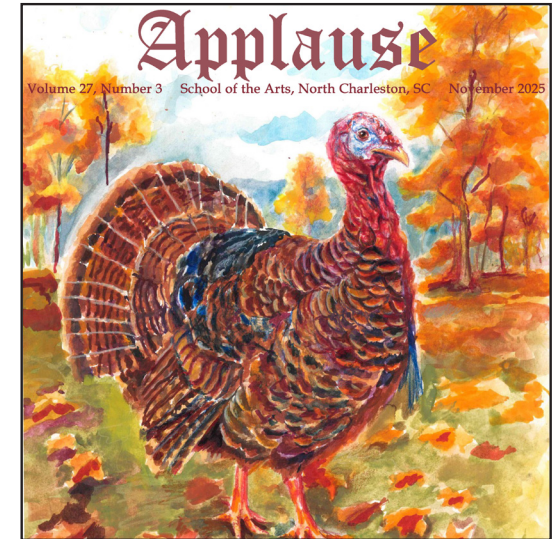
Thank you to our incredible *Applause* cover artists!



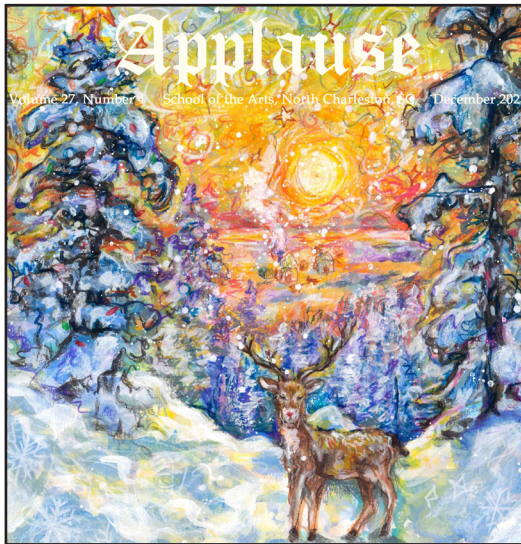
Callie Jones



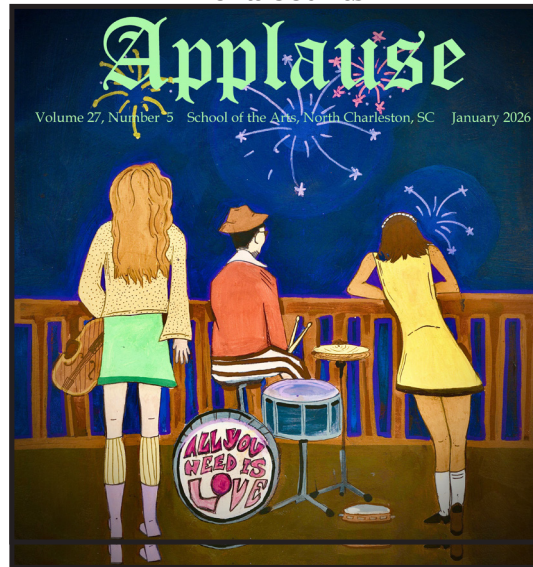
Amelia Counts



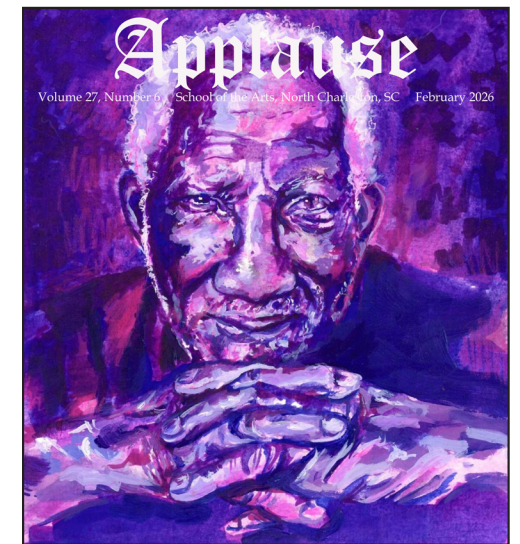
Cameron Hazel



Whitney Werking



Quinn Powell



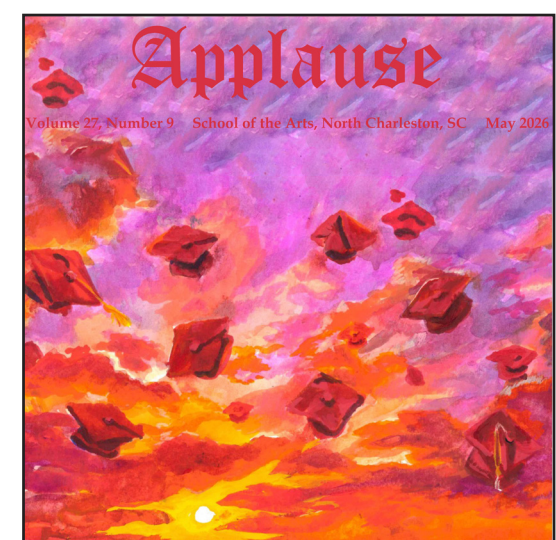
Cameron Hazel



Charlotte Whitley



Pia Oronce



Cameron Hazel



“Adrian Rayburn because he’s always working really hard and helping people.”

-Jude Wapner, 6th grade Piano



“Bella-Adore Williams because she always has a positive attitude.”

- Candace Brantley, 7th grade Theater



“Anna Leshner because she’s very hardworking and just really nice!”

-Charlotte Sapp, 8th grade Band



“Gweny Svendsen because she is always positive regardless of how things get and I strive to be more like that.”

- Ms. Miller, High School Math



“Juvon Gilliard because nothing seems to rattle him. He handles all of the pressure on him with grace.”

-Dr. Selby, Strings Teacher

Who is an SOA Senior that Inspires You?

by Trinity Collins and Sheridan King



“Vadym Stefanyshyn because he is always busy but still manages to do well in school and sports.”

-Mr. Verone, Spanish Teacher



“Audra Elm because she’s really talented at both art and guitar.”

-Collins Rabon, freshman Fashion



“Kent Mackey because she knows herself and she’s somebody I aspire to be.”

-Samare Promanee, sophomore Band



“Myles Owens-Walker, because he’s super talented, hardworking, and nice.”

-Callie Williams, junior Strings



“Sara Supelano, because she’s so great at what she does and she makes other people smile and believe in themselves.”

- Michelle Barrios, senior Visual Arts