

THE EPOCH TIMES

LIFE &

TRADITION

By listening, we learn more about the person we are conversing with; by digging deeper, we get past superficialities and get to know many aspects of him or her.



NATHAN ROGERS/UNSPLASH

COURTESY OF WAYNE A. BARNES



Natalia Barnes, at about 6 years old, set for another surgery at the children's hospital in San Diego, Calif.

Natalia's Dance

A 9-year-old girl's talent show proves to be about much more than raw talent

WAYNE A. BARNES

"The Skyline Elementary School in Solana Beach will have its fifth annual talent show," the announcement read. The students were all abuzz with who would try out, who would "make the cut," and just how many would have the courage to stand before a couple hundred of their peers and parents and perform. Entries ranged from joke tellers, original skits, and—the most popular—musical acts.

My daughter Natalia came home psyched up to perform a lip-sync with half-a-dozen of her friends to the music of a popular teenage boy group currently adored by elementary school girls who know every word of their every song. Nine-year-old Natalia, it seemed to me, would be a bright and cheery addition to any eager chorus line of fourth-graders. She was born with spina bifida, a severe disability where a spinal lesion prevented nerves from growing into her legs. This resulted in her having no feeling below the knees. After several operations on her feet, ankles, legs, and spine, with the help of leg braces, Natalia is able to get around for short distances without her wheelchair.

A few days later, Natalia came home from school fighting an emotion that crisscrossed her lovely little face until she finally fell to her bed and let the tears flow. "One of my friends told me I couldn't do the song with them. She said, 'Natalia, you can't dance.'" She buried her face in her pillow and was inconsolable.

I was never one to take "No" for an answer and saw this as a growing-up opportunity for Natalia. I suggested that if no one would work with her, she might do a different number on her own. I explained that when a door closes, it is not necessarily locked.

Natalia was initially reluctant, but a deep-felt desire to perform surged to the surface. She was soon flipping through my CDs looking for just the right song. She picked out one by Garth Brooks.

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I'm All Ears: Becoming a Better Listener

JEFF MINICK

So you're at a party with friends, and Steve asks what you've been reading lately. You launch into a description of Sarah Bakewell's "How to Live, A Life of Montaigne," her biography of the "father of the essay," telling Steve enthusiastically how much you're learning from this book and how you want to read some of the Frenchman's essays. Less than two minutes into your narrative, you notice that while he's nodding at the appropriate places and saying such things as "interesting" or "wow," Steve is looking past you at the treats the hostess is bringing to the hors d'oeuvres table. You might as well be talking to the sofa.

When we truly listen to others, they may open up and share their brokenness with us.

Or, even worse, a friend is telling you about his camping trip with his sons last weekend. He mentions to you the canoe they rented for an afternoon, and that word canoe sends you back to our own childhood when you used to hit North Carolina's Yadkin River in that yellow fiberglass canoe your father had bought. Man, those were the days. You think of that time when you were still in your mid-teens, and your dad let you and your younger brother make an overnight river trip together, and how you had camped on an island. Why, you wonder, did you give up canoeing? Maybe you should consider buying a canoe for you and your own kids. Maybe—

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In an age of distraction, it's all too easy to not listen carefully.

I'm All Ears: Becoming a Better Listener

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"So what do you think?" your friend asks. That's when you realize you've lost the entire thread of the conversation. Most of us have experienced these breakdowns in communication. Because many of us are poor listeners.

'You're Not Listening'

In "You're Not Listening: What You're Missing and Why It Matters" (Celadon Books, 2019), Kate Murphy takes a long look at our listening skills and concludes most of us come up short in that department. A journalist who has spent much of her career interviewing people, she's found that "whether it's a person on the street, CEO, or celebrity—I often get the sense that they are unaccustomed to having people listen to them. When I respond with genuine interest to what they are saying and encourage them to tell me more, they seem surprised, as if it's a novel experience. ... They find in me someone who will finally, at last, listen to them."

Murphy points to several causes for our inattentiveness: the age of distraction which we inhabit, making assumptions about people's opinions before we hear them out, thinking of our response rather than listening to an argument, and the fast pace of life that makes us impatient when the speaker is fumbling with words or thoughts.

This disconnect is unfortunate, because as Murphy tells us near the end of "You're Not Listening," "Not listening reduces the level of discourse. ... A listener has a reactive effect on the speaker. As a result, careful listening elevates the conversation because speakers become more responsible and aware of what they are saying."

To find evidence for her premises, we have merely to look to America's public forum, where all too often everyone is talking—or more likely, shouting—and no one is listening.

Name Tags

In one chapter, "Listening to Opposing Views," Murphy addresses the anger and misunderstanding that damages so much of our current political discourse. When we hear those who describe themselves as conservative or progressive, for example, we immediately make vast assumptions about their beliefs.

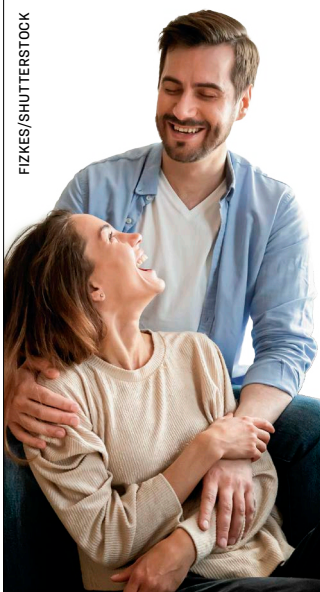
We do the same when we label each other in less contentious conversations.

Suppose you asked a stranger that all-American question, "What do you do?" "I'm retired, but I was a chemist for a pharmaceutical company," he replies.

Some among us might instantly categorize him as a scientist, a black-and-white "just the facts, ma'am" sort of guy, and leave it at that.

Yet if we dug a little deeper, we might find a loving husband, a father and grandfather, a guitarist, a guy who loves sailing and who restored his own boat, and a motorcyclist. Instead of searching him out and listening

Look for nuance during the conversation. We speak not only with our tongue and lips, but with our facial and body expressions as well.



It's easy to interrupt someone in a conversation, but try to let the person speak until he or she is finished.

to his story, we stop asking questions and make him a caricature.

Let me come closer to home. If you asked me how I make my living these days, I would say, "I'm a freelance writer." This label may sound romantic—heck, it even sounds romantic to a child—but the unvarnished truth is that for hours every day of the week, I apply my bottom to a chair and my fingers to a keyboard. Every morning I say to myself, sometimes aloud, "Let the magic begin," and most often something spills out of me onto the screen of my laptop. Otherwise, however, any outside observer would conclude I lead a life as dull as dishwater.

But here's the point: I'm much more than this single tag. I'm a father and grandfather, a man with some good habits and some bad who has given a bit to the world while at the same time making enormous mistakes.

It's called being human. And listening to others makes all of us more human.

Faking It

Some companies, as Murphy tells us, offer workshops in listening to their employees, especially those in sales. Some of these are effective, but many simply provide the tools for a surface appearance of listening. Nodding at the right places, repeating the client's words—"We are looking for faster deliveries at lower prices," "Faster deliveries at lower prices, got it"—or exhibiting physical interest by leaning forward or chuckling in the right places: these and other tricks may fool the customer, but meanwhile the listener may be missing important information that the customer is attempting to impart.

Long ago, I knew a seminarian who took a class in clinical psychology where his instructor trained the students to say, "I hear you" from time to time when counseling parishioners. For several years afterward, this young man would tote out that expression even in casual conversations, which always made me smile because he clearly was more interested in pretending to hear me than in listening.

Some Tips

Like Kate Murphy, I sometimes interview people. Many of these subjects are homeschooling moms—I write a column called "Featured Families" for a home education magazine—and all of these interviews I conduct by phone. Because we don't see each other, I must rely on verbal nuances—a sudden laugh, a touch of sadness in the voice—to help drive the interview. Though I don't consider myself a particularly good listener in my daily life, I have discovered some devices that make for solid interviews. Here are a few of them:

Develop a rapport with the speaker. Be pleasant from the start. Sincerely ask about her day.

Ask a question and then allow her to answer the question. Anyone who listens to talk radio knows that many of these on-air hosts will ask their callers a question, and

just as the caller is making an important point, the host interrupts. It irritates me as a listener when the host barges in like this, and I'm sure it offends some of the callers.

So if you ask a question—"What are you reading these days?"—allow the person to answer in full. Far more often than not, when I use this tactic during interviews, the mom on the other side of the line will give me many more details than if I kept badgering her with questions.

Look for nuance during the conversation. We speak not only with our tongue and lips, but with our facial and body expressions as well. A small example: We ask a friend, "How are you doing?" and she replies, "I'm fine," but she follows that assertion with a sigh and slumping shoulders. If we catch those signs, we might follow up with "No, really. How are you doing?"

Allow for the unexpected. Several times over the last three years, a few of these homeschool moms I interviewed broke down and wept on the phone, traumatized by a grown son who had repudiated his education and his parents, by a husband who was just diagnosed with stage-4 cancer, by remembering the death of a young daughter. When we truly listen to others, they may open up and share their brokenness with us.

Listening Is Not a Requirement

Of course, improving our listening skills doesn't mean we have to listen to everyone who crosses our path. As Murphy writes, "To be a good listener does not mean you must suffer fools gladly, or indefinitely, but rather helps you more easily identify fools and makes you wise to their foolishness. And perhaps most important, listening keeps you from being the fool yourself."

Once when I was in a conversation with a friend, who is not a fool, by the way, she was going on about some subject—it was a trip to the grocery store?—and I finally raised my hand and said, "Too much information." She laughed, in part because she recognizes her proclivity for detailed description, and our conversation moved on.

We Can Learn by Listening

Listening takes work. For most of us, and I include myself, it doesn't come as naturally as talking.

A friend of mine, John, is a great talker, particularly around me, but he's also a great listener. An example: A couple of years ago, while buying an ice cream cone when he was visiting here in Front Royal, he asked the vendor, who turned out to be the owner as well, about her business. As their conversation progressed, she explained why she preferred to hire school teachers for the summer instead of teenagers, how her ice cream truck had come to occupy the lot on which it sat, how long she'd been in business, and why she favored certain ice cream flavors. She shared these facts not just because John asked her questions, but also because he listened to her.

When we listen, we learn.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust on Their Wings," and two works of non-fiction, "Learning as I Go" and "Movies Make the Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See [JeffMinick.com](#) to follow his blog.

Natalia's Dance

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I smiled when I heard her choice: "Walking After Midnight." The next day we found a CD with Patsy Cline's rendition from the '50s, and she began to practice.

Natalia learned all the words in a flash. We bought a wireless microphone that feeds into our FM radio so she could sing along with the CD on the big speakers. She began to put real life and feeling into the words, but then came the choreography.

With her leg braces, Natalia's walk is fairly level, though a little rocky. When she's in a hurry, she has a glide step that cants her hips and knees at angles but gets her where she wants to go just fine. But could she make it on stage? A parent will always harbor greater fear than the child, whose heart must carry her through the experience. No parent's hand can ever reach far or fast enough to catch her if she begins to falter. I could only stand back and watch and hope.

The trouts turned into show-ups; if you showed up, you made it into the show. There were two dozen "acts" on the program, and Natalia was number 18. At a rehearsal, while walking during her song, she tripped and went down. I heard everyone gasp and hold their breath.

She looked surprised by the bump to her rump and remained seated to finish out the line. She smiled in the direction of the not-present audience, then climbed back up to finish the song. Looking around, I saw a couple dozen parents exhale with relief. At the end, a mother I didn't know came over and cried on my shoulder. I was amazed, for I myself hadn't gasped. Perhaps I had become too accustomed to my own daughter.

There were three days of rehearsals. Teachers put the acts in order and stagehands made everything ready. By now, the programs had been printed, so there was no time left to chicken out. Natalia had practiced her song a hundred times at home, but does a child ever feel completely ready for such a performance?

At a rehearsal, while walking during her song, she tripped and went down. I heard everyone gasp and hold their breath.

Then the big night arrived. Over 300 people lined up all the way to the parking lot to pay \$5 apiece for tickets. Volunteers manned concession stands just like the ones at theaters downtown, except that our fare was nothing fancier than pizza, and the prices were a bit less than at the San Diego Opera. The auditorium filled with parents and grandparents, teachers, families, and friends. It was showtime.

The junior comedians and actors laughed through some of their lines and forgot others, but it didn't diminish the laughter from the audience. If some of the little musicians were off-key, nobody cared. After all, it was your child or your neighbors' children performing. Dads and moms excused their way to the front, cameras at the ready, to capture their child's big moment. Then it was Natalia's turn.

She wore black boots and a tan pleated skirt that had taken me forever to iron to be just right, a flowered blouse that matched her turquoise neckerchief and a black cowboy hat left over from a Grand Canyon trip a couple of years before. Her three large brothers led the crowd with



Natalia plays cards with her brothers around the time of the performance. They cheered her on as she performed.



Natalia at her graduation from the University of Maryland in 2012, with her father Wayne Barnes.

shouts of "Go, Natalia," and "Diva, Diva!" Natalia bounded out of her wheelchair and bounced across the stage to get the mike. Her blond pigtails dangled to and fro, and her elfin smile rounded out what everyone wanted to see in a little girl performing. The mood was set, and the music began. She took her pose, canted her head, and she was on.

"I go out walkin' ... after midnight ... in the moonlight ... just like we used to do ... I go out walking ... after midnight ... searching fo-o-or yo-o-o-u." She walked with the words and, at the end of the line, spun around to walk back again. Sure, it was an unsteady gait, but it was her gait. Natalia was alone up on the stage without any girlfriends to lean on, and she had mustered up the gumption to take on the task. Her miniature melodic voice captured the crowd, and she kept the walking timed with the tune, just so.

In the middle of the song, the lyrics paused while the music went on, and then Natalia did her dance. She held the mike above her head and spun around once. Then she did a double. There was a moment of anguish when the crowd, fearing she might topple over, went hush silent—but she retained her balance and gave that smile of triumph.

She belted out the last few lines of the song so even Patsy Cline, looking down from on high, would have had a tear in her eye.

"I go out walking, after midnight, in the starlight, just hoping you will be ... a-walkin' ... after midnight ... searching fo-o-o-r me-e-e-e-e-e."

The song ended. She took a pose, one hand extended to the audience, the other above her head, a braced foot tilted up on its heel, a toss of her chin into the air—and that smile.

Thunderous applause erupted, partly from relief that she had made it through

without falling, but mostly in appreciation of her performance. It was more, much more, than even her own family had expected. We had been there for moral support, fearing against the worst but always hoping for the best. But the crowd went on. They yelled and cheered and stomped, thoroughly embarrassing my little blond who took her required bow and then quickly whisked herself offstage.

When the show ended, I was approached by many. There's a difference between well-wishers and those who are genuinely impressed. People you don't know don't hug you very often. Friends and new faces alike had tears in their eyes as they shook my hand and patted me, the Dad, on the back. It took forever to reach Natalia amid a throng of admirers. And, her friends with the lip-sync plans never did perform. Sure enough, a door had been closed, but Natalia had stepped up and thrown it wide open. She had marched across the threshold carrying her own tune and, in a way, had carried the night as well. She had entered the arena—and emerged victorious.

She belted out the last few lines of the song so even Patsy Cline, looking down from on high, would have had a tear in her eye.

Wayne A. Barnes was an FBI agent for 29 years working counterintelligence. He had many undercover assignments, including as a member of the Black Panthers. His first spy stories were from debriefing Soviet KGB defectors. He now investigates privately in South Florida.



Natalia Barnes is currently a certified spin instructor and trainer.

15 Years Later

[Editor's note: Natalia Barnes is currently a certified spin instructor and personal trainer in Baltimore. The talent show took place in 1999. In 2014, a series of events occurred that the author thought deserved to be an addendum to this essay. At the time, Natalia was working as a hostess at a Gordon Biersch restaurant on Baltimore's Inner Harbor. She chronicled what happened in the Facebook posts that follow.]

MARCH 12, 2014:

I think I just had one of the best moments of my life. I sat at a man at a table in GB (Gordon Biersch) today who noticed my leg braces. He asked me about them and said, "My daughter has leg braces." I freaked out and said, "What does she have?!" "Spina bifida," he said!! I said that I did too and the look he gave me was indescribable. Maybe shock is the closest, but overjoyed certainly. He said, "but look at you walking around, wearing heels!" and I said that it took me forever to learn and they're tiny heels but yes, I swear it's possible!

He shared the story with me that my own father has told so many times. They were completely blind-sided by the birth defect and were so concerned how their daughter would turn out. Would she be happy? Would she make friends? Date? Travel? Dance? His daughter, Isabella, is only four and has just learned to walk. I know what lies ahead for her and it's incredible but he feels so lost and in the dark, he said. He had so many questions about my life and how I am, and I told him the one thing I know he wanted and needed to hear "She is going to be so happy. More than fine. She is going to have a wonderful life. I know." He cried and so did I.

We exchanged numbers and I'll meet little Isabella soon. I'll help them in any way I can so they have an advantage neither I nor my parents did. But the thing that knocks the wind right out of me is that since I was about 14, I got the idea that if I could travel back in time I'd pick the day I was born just to show my parents how things would turn out. I'd never say who I was, but I'd show them how life for a bifida baby could be so they wouldn't have to be so scared. I never thought I might actually get such an opportunity. I realized it the second he gave me that look of shock. Today my mere presence gave someone hope. I'm still crying. Today was a good day.



Natalia Barnes with Bella (R), and her big sister Gabby (L).

MARCH 27, 2014:

Me and little Bella (right) and her big sister Gabby (left)! Just came back from dinner with these beautiful ladies and their parents! Bella is the one with spina bifida and the very first thing she said to me was "Are you her?" and I cheerfully said yes and she then immediately came in for a hug. Lots and lots of them. Didn't want to let go and neither did I! We held hands on the way back to my car and I swear her little wobble is so sweet I immediately caught diabetes. Best. Night. EVER.

Additionally, she tried to run ahead of us at one point and I now understand the terror that you all feel watching me do things you're not sure I can do. I mean, I'm not going to stop, but I understand. Frankly, if it wasn't for gravity and law enforcement I'D BE UNSTOPPABLE.

TIMELESS WISDOM

George Washington Deemed Religion and Morality Essential to Political Prosperity

JOSHUA CHARLES

George Washington said something that many modern Americans would find nonsensical—and he did so not in some private document, but in perhaps the most public statement of his career, his Farewell Address published just prior to the end of his presidency.

He said the following: “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens... A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity.” [Emphasis added]

According to Washington, it was impossible for an American to claim they were a patriot if they “should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness,” namely religion and morality.

He provided two reasons for his claim. First: “Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice?”

Washington was referring to oaths taken by citizens took in courts of law, or when they assumed various public offices. Such oaths invoked God as a witness to the truthfulness of the claim being made, whether with respect to evidence and testimony, or the rectitude of one’s intentions in assuming public office. No testimony of any kind could be accepted in court without an oath, for if the witness or expert were lying, they were also calling God a liar, and thus ensuring they would be cursed in the afterlife—something unimaginable for the genuinely religious person.

An anecdote from “Democracy in America” by Alexis de Tocqueville—a Frenchman who visited America in the 1830’s—sheds some light: “While I was in America, a witness attended a court in the county of Chester (state of New York) and declared his disbelief in the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. The judge refused to accept his oath given that the witness had destroyed in advance any confidence in his testimony. Newspapers reported the fact without comment.”

Why would an American judge consider belief in God essential to an oath? For the same reasons cited by William Blackstone, the English jurist most often cited by the Founders:



ALL IMAGES IN PUBLIC DOMAIN

“The belief of a future state of rewards and punishments, the entertaining just ideas of the moral attributes of the supreme being, and a firm persuasion that he superintends and will finally compensate every action in human life (all which are clearly revealed in the doctrines, and forcibly inculcated by the precepts, of our savior Christ) these are the grand foundation of all judicial oaths; which call God to witness the truth of those facts, which perhaps may be only known to him and the party attesting; all moral evidence therefore, all confidence in human veracity, must be weakened by irreligion, and overthrown by total infidelity.”

This was closely connected with the second reason Washington offered in his Farewell Address to support his position: “[L]et us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.”

As I have frequently observed, the Founders were among the best-read generations in history. Among the topics they were most familiar with was history, especially Greek and Roman history.

Greek historians like Polybius ascribed the rise of the Roman state to (among other reasons) the gravity with which they treated oaths (judicial and otherwise) as divine obligations. Roman statesmen like Cicero made the same observation centuries later. Such beliefs held the Roman state together, and reinforced the mutual confidence Romans had in one another.

Various historians and statesmen attributed the downfall of the Roman Republic to the decline in religious belief and the accompanying unraveling of morality. “Ruins of the Forum, Rome” by Bernardo Bellotto, 1743.

Greek historians like Polybius ascribed the rise of the Roman state to (among other reasons) the gravity with which they treated oaths (judicial and otherwise) as divine obligations.

Likewise, various ancient historians and statesmen ascribed the downfall of the Roman Republic to the decline in religious belief, and the concomitant unraveling of morality. Even in pre-Christian days, they considered religion and morality as indissolubly connected because of the reality of an afterlife of rewards and punishments for the actions in this life. You may elude man’s justice, but you could never elude God’s justice, and this serves as a powerful bridle on the worst of human passions.

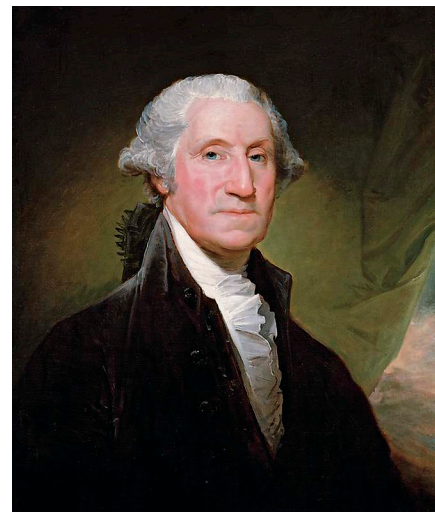
Belief in God, and what the Founders often referred to as a “future state” in which he would dispense “rewards and punishments” for one’s conduct in life was the cornerstone of their beliefs on the necessity of religion to a free society—whether they were very religious (like Benjamin Rush) or less religious (like Thomas Jefferson). All of them were agreed on this point.

They would all say, with John Adams, some form of the following:

“Religion I hold to be essential to morals. I never read of an irreligious character in Greek or Roman history, nor in any other history, nor have I known one in life, who was not a rascal. Name one if you can, living or dead.”

Therefore, as Washington so bluntly asserted, subverting these great truths of religion and morality could never be compatible with patriotism.

Joshua Charles is a former White House speechwriter for Vice President Mike Pence, No. 1 New York Times bestselling author, historian, columnist, writer/ghostwriter, and public speaker. Follow him on Twitter @JoshuaTCharles or see JoshuaTCharles.com



A portrait of George Washington by Gilbert Stuart, 1795.

A Surprise to Remember

Town residents get together to thank their only UPS driver

JENNI JULANDER

The small town of Dauphin, Pennsylvania, has just under 800 residents, and only one UPS driver. It’s the sort of place where everyone knows everyone.

The town residents decided to thank their only UPS driver with a \$1,000 gift that moved him to tears.

UPS driver Chad Turns has been delivering packages for more than 10 years, reported Today. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Turns’s workload increased, just like it did for many other delivery workers. As the town’s only UPS driver, he worked 60–80 hours a week, according to the report.

Resident Jenny Shickley told the outlet



COURTESY OF KRISTIE VOGELSONG

Chad Turns, in Dauphin, Pa., discovers the thank-you event organized for him by local residents. He is the town’s only UPS driver.

that “everyone knows how special Chad is.”

Turns goes out of his way to make sure children aren’t home when their gifts arrive, the report said. He’s even gone so far as to seek one resident out at their parents’ house when they weren’t home to sign for a package.

Shickley decided to organize a small thank-you event for their hard-working driver. Through a community Facebook page, she set up a fundraiser.

“The funny thing is I meant to set it up

for \$300, but it set to \$500,” she told Today. “It hit \$500 within two days and the total wound up being a little over \$1,000.”

Shickley coordinated with Adam Kerr, Turn’s dispatcher and colleague, to surprise the driver at his last stop on March 2.

“Chad thought he was going to pick up a box, [but] it was the community and kids and big signs,” Shickley said.

Overwhelmed by the cheering, socially distanced crowd in the parking lot before him, Turns got teary-eyed. There were

balloons and thank-you posters, and a giant heart-shaped card. Community member, Adam Bryce, captured the moment in a video.

“I don’t know what to say,” Turns can be heard saying in the video, as he took it all in.

“You don’t have to say anything,” said a man behind the camera. “You’ve taken care of us ... we just wanted to say thank you.”

“It was very overwhelming,” Turns told Today. “The idea that they even thought of me to do anything ... to go above and beyond and do what they did yesterday was truly amazing to me.”

“It was a tearjerker. It was very touching and humbling,” Turns said, adding that the community has expressed their generosity to him all year long, through small gestures like offering him water and cookies along his route. However, he never expected a surprise this big.

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HISTORY

Historic Figures Who Recognized That Speech Is Freedom’s First Line of Defense

LAWRENCE W. REED

In a March 21, 2021, column (“One of the Most Significant Defenses of Free Speech in American History”), Boston Globe writer Jeff Jacoby quoted the great abolitionist Frederick Douglass:

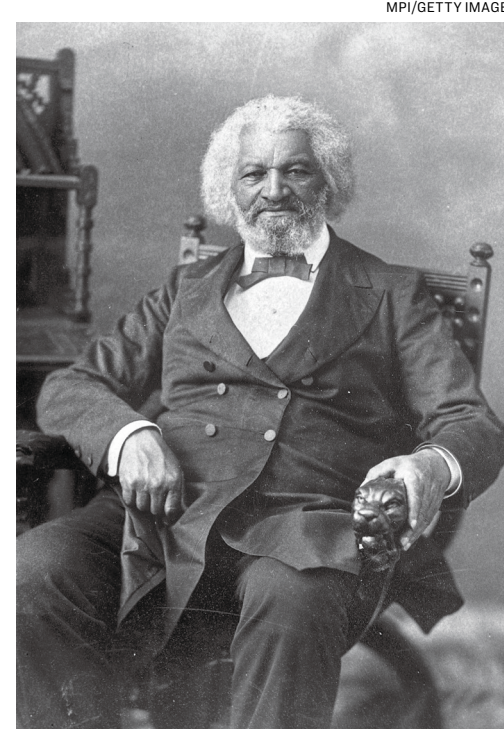
“To suppress free speech is a double wrong. It violates the rights of the hearer as well as those of the speaker. It is just as criminal to rob a man of his right to speak and hear as it would be to rob him of his money.”

It’s a sad, tragic, and shocking commentary on what some parents and many schools are teaching these days that Douglass’s statement might not meet with majority approval in America. Recent polls indicate that more than half of the American public believe that the First Amendment (which guarantees free speech) “is outdated and ought to be rewritten.” Support for what is traditionally regarded as freedom of speech is lowest among millennials.

Political correctness, cancel culture, and presentism are erasing past events and people. Intimidation is all too frequent on campuses and in the public square. Heather Higgins, CEO of Independent Women’s Voice, says:

“Today, many Americans are afraid to express their beliefs out of fear of retaliation or being ‘canceled.’ What is happening right now isn’t about suppressing hate speech. It’s about suppressing history, facts, and viewpoints that some self-appointed woke arbiters who are looking to be offended have decreed are damaging and hateful. That’s a recipe for a society defined by fear, division, mistrust, intolerance, discrimination, and ultimately violence.”

If the rush to shout people down and shut them up doesn’t alarm you, then you’re no friend of freedom. When speech dies, other freedoms follow. For that reason, we must push back against anti-free speech barbarians. We must make it unmistakably plain that we will not be silenced, nor will we allow others to be silenced, for the sake of anybody’s pet project or political agenda.



MPJ/GETTY IMAGES

“Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties.”—John Milton, in “Areopagitica”

Here is a selection of poignant remarks on behalf of freedom of speech. I hope it stiffens the spines of all who love freedom and who understand that speech is its first line of defense.

1. Milton: ‘Above All Liberties’

“Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties.”—John Milton, in “Areopagitica”

2. Frederick Douglass: ‘The Dread of Tyrants’

“Liberty is meaningless where the right

Of Snakes and Pigs: Life on a Florida Farm

JOHN FALCE

My first impression of the farmhouse was awe. It was a refreshing paradox from what we had left behind. A worn, old, brick dwelling sat majestically on four acres of sun-bathed grass, framed by untamed woods just waiting to be explored. Dragonflies floated through the hot summer air. We walked inside—and did a double take. The interior of the house didn’t quite fit with the wild splendor of the yard. The house had been branded a teardown, and we children could see why. My little brother found one thing he liked: the powder blue “softy” rug, as he called it. The unusual level of plushness was likely due to the layer of thick, white mold resting serenely atop. Outside, the mysteriously, beautifully spreading woods were found to conceal venomous serpents in large numbers. After several close calls, further exploration was halted by Mom. It definitely wasn’t a regular home; were we up to the challenge?



Author John Falce.

We moved to that outbreak abode from a very different setting. The home before was one of many, clustered in a pristinely planned subdivision. Although life was neater, there was room to be desired. From the inside, the home was a mini, middle-class mansion. Two stories, four bathrooms, five bedrooms—plus a few bonus rooms that rarely saw use. But, in typical fashion for the housing genre, the outside wasn’t nearly so spacious. The tiny yard was only just big enough for our massive house to perch on. We often found ourselves running through five or six of our neighbors’ backyards just to pass a football, and once fences were raised, it became too impractical to clamber over barriers every time someone missed a pass. If we aimed our games in the other direction (the short slope direction), the ball would invariably jettison into the man-made pond that enveloped the neighborhood like a regal moat. We did not find our inner gardeners there, either. The grueling heat was a prime deterrent from outdoor activity in a confined space. We were grateful to have a comfortable home, but it wasn’t the landscape of my childhood dreams.

That house needed no extra work. The truest shortcoming of our home in Jacksonville was not related to size or work though; instead the problem was Dad’s frequent deployments from home. His endless months at sea were frightening times for us. That all changed when we moved. Instead of deploying for the Coast Guard, Dad taught flight school and stayed local and fixed our new farmhouse in all his free time. It seemed that everything needed renovation: the kitchen, the den, the sewer, even the ceilings. Dad all but rebuilt the house from the ground up, working harder than the few men he hired to help, like for example the ever absent electricians.

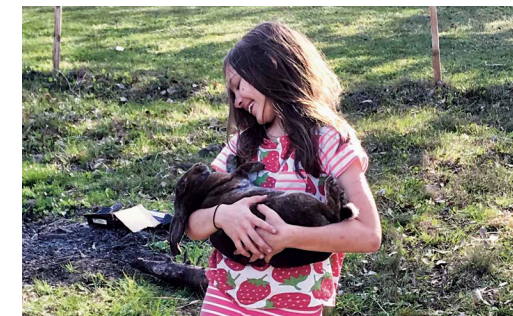


ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOHN FALCE

(Front to back) Smart Pig, Bertha, and Runt.

In the off-time we kids ran errands with Mom, or swiped gleefully at the dragonflies in the yard with butterfly nets. One of our favorite destinations was the hardware store. We always wondered why we had to sign a waiver when we went in, as we giggled up at the unlikely sight of toilets dangling from the ceiling. Those were happy times.

I am, by nature, an allergic kid. During the subdivision years, before we moved to our mini-farm, the only pets I’d ever had were beta fish. Animals have fascinated my interest for most of my life, but to live amongst them is another matter. Let’s start with the snakes. Vipers haunt my new yard, and it is disturbingly impossible to



The author’s little sister, Giovanna, with her rabbit Fatty Bolger.

see them unless you are practically on top of one. I have found snakes poised in such heinous positions one would hardly believe they could be there, and yet, there they are: behind the barn, coiled at the edge of the grass, in the ditch, slithering through 90-degree heat on the road, and too often, right beside my foot. Aside from being a backyard hazard that keeps us looking downward, they are just plain creepy.

To counterbalance the forces of evil, our field has also become the glorious stalking ground of a mother bobcat and her baby! They are a thrill to see, as is the ominous effect they have on the deer. We have even heard rumors of bears in the woods, but I have yet to witness their effect. And, not all of the native animals are so beastly; deer abound in, and armadillos crash through, the woods, both leaving their pitfalls all about the yard. We also have several resi-

dent hawks, and an eyrie of eagles who are beloved by my whole family, particularly because they help cull the water moccasin population. There is a bayou behind it all, which only became visible after we battled thorn bushes and swamp devils to see the sparkling water. The wildlife out there is the most intriguing: pelicans, cormorants, bull sharks, alligators, and high-jumping fish complete the resident menagerie. For extra security, we got a hypoallergenic Goldendoodle to manage the crowd. She is tougher than she looks.

7. Justice Douglass: The Most Dangerous Subversion

“Restriction of free thought and free speech is the most dangerous of all subversions. It is the one un-American act that could most easily defeat us.”—Justice William O. Douglass, in “The One Un-American Act”

8. Trenchard and Gordon: No Wisdom Without Free Thought

“Without freedom of thought, there can be no such thing as wisdom; and no such thing as public liberty, without freedom of speech; which is the right of every man, as far as by it, he does not hurt or control the right of another. And this is the only check it ought to suffer, and the only bounds it ought to know. This sacred privilege is essential to free governments, that the security of property, and the freedom of speech always go together; and in those wretched countries where a man cannot call his tongue his own, he can scarce call anything else his own. Whoever would overthrow the liberty of a nation, must begin by subduing the freeness of speech.”—John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon in “Cato’s Letters”

Lawrence W. Reed is FEE’s President Emeritus, Humphreys Family Senior Fellow, and Ron Manners Global Ambassador for Liberty, having served for nearly 11 years as FEE’s president (2008-2019). He is the author of the 2020 book, “Was Jesus a Socialist?” as well as “Real Heroes: Incredible True Stories of Courage, Character, and Conviction” and “Excuse Me, Professor: Challenging the Myths of Progressivism.” His website is LawrenceWReed.com

This article was originally published on FEE.org

The home is fixed now. Dad worked hard and we helped too. It is not big but it is beautiful. We gave up our playroom for play room outdoors. We can spread out and play family games of football, soccer, and even baseball now.

Plus, we added domestic life to the wildlife. We got bunnies that my sister cares for because apparently I am still not evolved enough to tolerate rabbit fur. We also raise pigs, and guess who the pig farmer is? It turns out I am not allergic to swine. Sometimes it can be hard work taking care of them, but I find that the reward of supporting life is well worth the effort. I now understand all of those pig-related expressions, and can tell you firsthand, a pig really does stink. But I can live with it. One Sunday morning recently, while I was hurrying to feed the pigs before church, I became confused by a loud quacking sound as if from a relentless duck. I drew closer to investigate the source of the noise and was blindsided by a baby piglet half-buried under his mother in the pigpen. My dad and I gathered him inside and tucked him in front of the space heater while my mom prepared a bottle.

As I felt his thumping heart under my hand, I was deeply touched by that small miracle of creation. New life came into being! I realized that from the moment of its conception, life is beautiful. For me, the greatest diversity between our subdivision lifestyle and a spreading farm is the cycle of work and life. I work harder now, but the reward is great, and life is good.

John Falce is 12 years old. He is Catholic, lives with his military pilot father, Florentine-trained artist mother, two brothers, and sister on a four-acre hobby farm in Milton, Fla. He is trying his hand at raising pigs when he’s not at school. John got into writing while obligingly editing for his mother’s book. He loves a good story and hopes you enjoy this one.

DEAR NEXT GENERATION:

‘Take Each Day as an Opportunity to Be Better—Be a Better You’

→ Advice from our readers to our young people

Dear Next Generation:

Wisdom is not a product of time, but a product of applied knowledge enhanced through the opportunity of time. We have had a year of uncertainty and wild calamity, yet it has presented the proposition of change and, most importantly, wisdom. As the world around us may take a dive or seem to expand and contract with the ever-confusing media highlights, this volatility will forever be existential. It is inescapable. With that knowledge, applied, let us all use wisdom to move forward.

Take each day as an opportunity to be better—be a better you. Open your eyes when you awake and say to yourself (or out loud), “Today is a beautiful day and opportunity to be great!” We all must focus our energy and time on the power of positive thinking and affirmations, to bring the energy that is necessary to heed hope and positive change in the world. Recognize that as much as we try to control our outer world first through vehement expression of our opinions, destruction of physical constructs, or mass organization of supporters, we must all first control ourselves.

Our mind and behavior are collinear. Take note of the next time you feel calm and collected—what are your thoughts? Or the next time you are angry and frustrated—what are your thoughts? If we all take the time daily to breathe deeply and give ourselves the chance to awake with positivity and to begin on a deeper understanding of ourselves, we can then begin to effect change in our outside world. When we find our minds wandering through thoughts of doubt and recklessness, let’s all stop, take a deep breath, and believe: “Today is an opportunity to be great. Remain calm, breathe. Smile with joy. Share compassion with others.” With repetition of this behavior, we teach ourselves to exude acceptance and to relax our hearts and minds. Yes, we all can still “fight” for what is “right,” but we do this not under the duress of anger, but through the freedom of love of ourselves and compassion for others.

—Mike Numon, Connecticut

Take note of the next time you feel calm and collected—what are your thoughts? Or the next time you are angry and frustrated—what are your thoughts?

Dear Next Generation:

The following is how my husband and I have lived our lives. It was defined over many years, but was always at the base of what we did as individuals and as a family. Good luck.

“Work Hard, Play Hard, Eat Well” is my response to people who ask how we have stayed active and healthy well into our senior years. My husband is 79 and goes to work every day at the family business we started in 1979. At 77, I am retired from my “paycheck” job that I loved but continue to do the accounting and all the paperwork involved in running a successful business.

We have been married for 56 years and decided early on that we were not going to fight over money and would never make decisions without in-depth discussions about the pros and cons. We were very conservative and in hindsight maybe too much so. Our first priority in making decisions was our family. They came first. We taught our two children and two granddaughters the “Work Hard, Play Hard, Eat Well” ethic, and they are all successful in their chosen professions.

Work Hard: Start by working hard at your getting a good education, one that has employment possibilities. You don’t have to have a bachelor’s degree to earn a good living, but you do have to have a skill. Along with that skill, you must be willing to go above and beyond the job requirements. Work those extra few minutes, volunteer to help, make suggestions to improve your job.

Have options. Develop skills that give you multiple avenues to get a great job. You will change careers once or twice before you retire, but you need the skills and knowledge to get that new job. Work hard at learning something new all your life. That new vocation or avocation might be waiting for you. You must find a job that you love, not one you go to just for the paycheck.

Play Hard: Playing is your reward for working hard. Find activities that fit your lifestyle. Is traveling your thing? Do you enjoy sitting by a campfire in the mountains? Are you happiest when you are skiing, swimming, boating, or rock climbing? Make a

bucket list that has your wildest dreams about the things you want to do. Prioritize and get started. Our list started with the really physical things that we knew could not wait until we retired, like rafting down the Colorado River, riding our motorcycle over 300,000 miles, off-road jeeping, and camping. Don’t put off playing hard for later in life because life happens and you don’t want to wish you had done the things that make you happy.

Eat Well: My best advice. Learn to cook. Teach your kids to cook. Sit down with your family for as many meals a day as you can. We always had breakfast and dinner together. You cannot eat well by eating all your meals in a restaurant. In order to keep your mind and body working at maximum efficiency, you need good food that is real food. Cut out the chemicals. Buy fresh! If you can’t get fresh, buy frozen; skip the canned, if at all possible. If the chemical list is longer than the real food list, don’t buy it. Busy lifestyles and conflicting schedules can make eating together as a family impossible, but make an effort. Sit down with your family and enjoy! Make your meals a family affair!

This simple formula has worked well for us. Of course, there are things we would do differently if we could start over, but the work, play, eat component will always be part of our lives. Be happy, work hard, and enjoy!

—Annette Kirk, California

What advice would you like to give to the younger generations?

We call on all of our readers to share the timeless values that define right and wrong, and pass the torch, if you will, through your wisdom and hard-earned experience. We feel that the passing down of this wisdom has diminished over time, and that only with a strong moral foundation can future generations thrive.

Send your advice, along with your full name, state, and contact information to NextGeneration@epochtimes.com or mail it to:

Next Generation, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY 10001

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF EKIBEN



(From left to right) 1. Ekiben co-founders Steve Chu (L) and Ephrem Abebe. 2. Ekiben in Baltimore. 3. Ekiben co-founders Steve Chu and Ephrem Abebe were two of the winners of the 46th Annual Mayor’s Business Recognition Awards in Baltimore in 2020. 4. Rina’s mother’s favorite dish, Ekiben’s crispy tempura broccoli.

The Heart of Hospitality

Restaurant owners make 6-hour trip to cook favorite dish for cancer-stricken customer

LOUISE BEVAN

When two Baltimore restaurant owners learned that a longtime customer was dying of lung cancer, they proved that truly amazing customer service comes straight from the heart.

Six hours away in Vermont, one of Asian-fusion restaurant Ekiben’s most enthusiastic customers wanted nothing more than to taste their crispy tempura broccoli one last time.

The Baltimore restaurant co-founders, Steve Chu and Ephrem Abebe, made it happen.

Brandon Jones and his wife, Rina, contacted Ekiben after Rina’s mother, who remains anonymous, made her dying wish known, reported The Baltimore Sun.

She was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer in December last year

and has since refused cancer treatment in favor of living her last days comfortably, at home.

Brandon, a 37-year-old engineer and by his own admission a terrible cook, was hoping to find out how he could make Ekiben’s coveted tempura broccoli—a dish that Rina’s mom had fallen in love with at a Baltimore food market in 2015.

The couple suspected that a take-out order would spoil during the six-hour drive to Vermont.

However, Chu’s response floored him: he asked for the date, time, and location, saying he and Abebe would make the dish themselves.

Brandon told The Baltimore Sun that Chu and Abebe were “adamant” to cook and meet the family.

Saturday, March 14, was a snowy day in Vermont. Yet Chu, Abebe, and their coworker Joe Añonuevo loaded a fryer into the back of their

“You see so many people, day in and day out ... we’ll always remember the faces.”

Steve Chu, co-founder, Ekiben

pickup truck and made the 500-mile drive to Rina’s mom’s house, arriving on Sunday.

“We get there—it just stopped snowing,” Chu said.

Remaining socially distant, the coworkers set up shop in the back of their truck, laboring over the fryer for hours to reach the optimal cooking temperature.

“It was the most perfect tempura broccoli we ever made,” Chu told the outlet.

Rina’s mom relished the delicious, unexpected surprise from Baltimore despite the sores in her mouth that made it difficult to eat, the report said.

“You see so many people, day in and day out ... we’ll always remember the faces,” Chu said, claiming that the team immediately recognized Rina’s mom as a regular customer.

Baltimore City Councilman Zeke Cohen reposted the story on his personal Facebook page.

“I always point to Ekiben as a business that always models respect for community and treats people with love,” Cohen wrote. “Read this, eat their tofu nuggets, and try not to cry!”

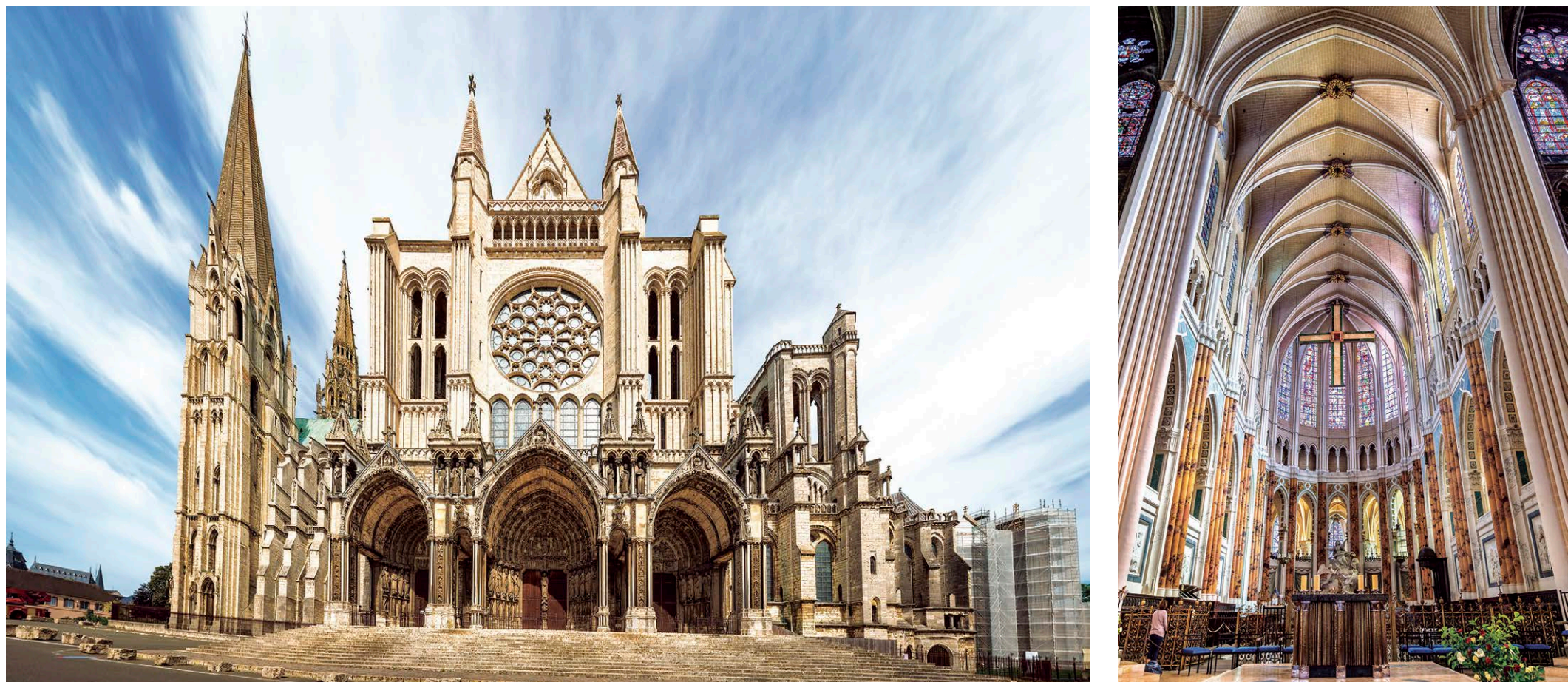
Chu, Abebe, and Añonuevo, who politely refused even gas money for their troubles, drove back to Baltimore to resume restaurant service on Monday.

“It was a no-brainer,” Chu told The Baltimore Sun.

“We’re just glad we could make [Rina’s mom] happy. ... I think that’s what hospitality is all about.”

Rina said, “It’s still surreal to me that it even happened, and that people would be so generous and kind for someone that they don’t even know.”

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK



(Left) The south entrance to the Cathedral of Our Lady of Chartres is an exquisite example of High Gothic architecture. (Right) Centuries of soot and grime had blackened the walls of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Chartres. In this 2018 photograph of the nave, conservators cleaned and painted the walls white and shades of beige and yellow to reflect medieval decoration. (The top-left and top-right corners of the image show walls yet to be restored.)

LARGER THAN LIFE: ART THAT INSPIRES US THROUGH THE AGES

Reflecting the Divine: Cathedral of Our Lady of Chartres, France

The sun’s rays entering the nearly 27,000 square feet of stained glass windows of Notre-Dame de Chartres Cathedral create thousands of colored shards that bathe the interior in ethereal beauty. But beyond this earthly splendor, every one of the more

than 175 glorious stained glass windows inspire and encourage worshippers to venerate the Virgin Mary and look up to God.

Located just 50 miles from Paris, Notre-Dame de Chartres Cathedral, also known as the Cathedral of Our Lady of Chartres,

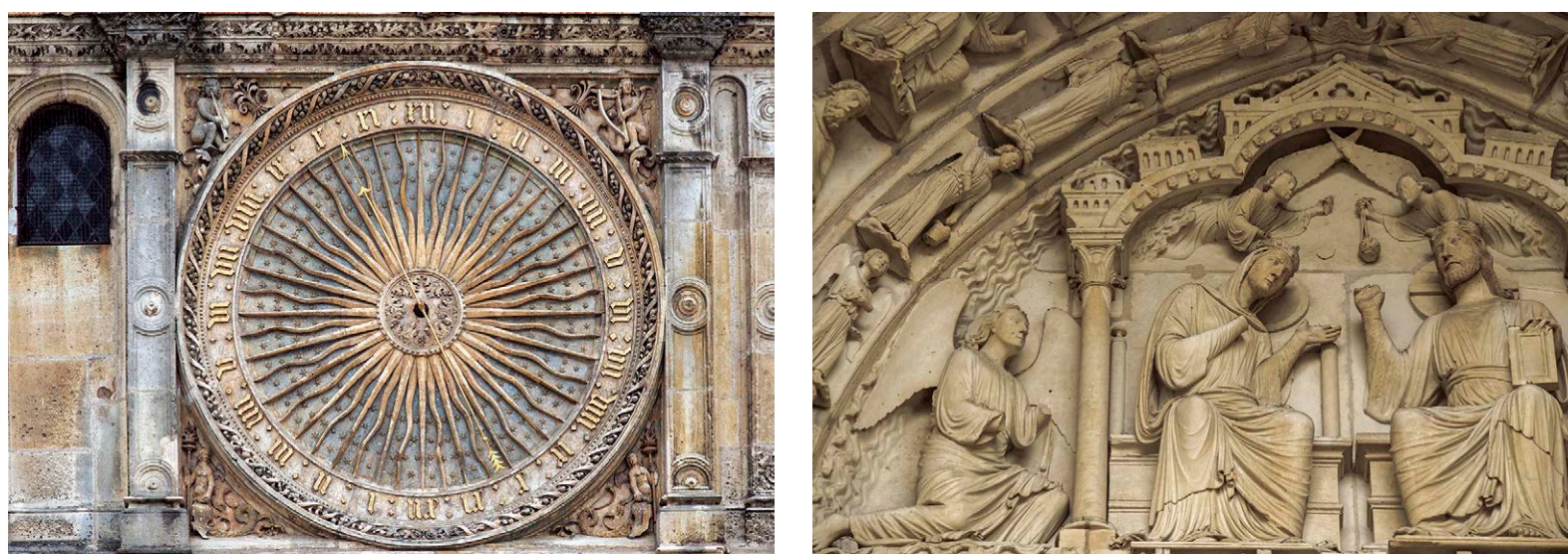
“is one of the most authentic and complete works of religious architecture of the early 13th century,” according to the UNESCO website.

A church has been on the current site since around the fourth century, after

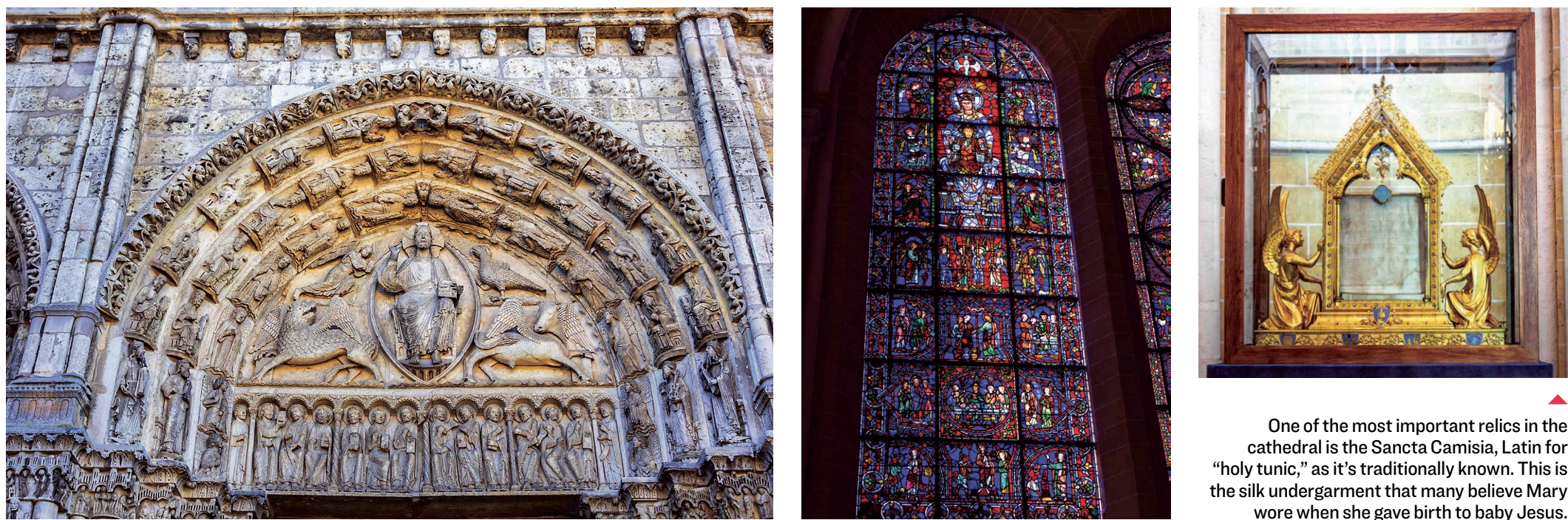
which at least five churches have been built due to war or fire. In 1194, fire devastated most of the early Gothic cathedral that had been built in 1145. But the crypt and west façade remained intact.

An important relic, once owned by Charlemagne, also survived the fire: the Sancta Camisia (Latin for “holy tunic”), the silk undergarment that many believe Mary wore when she gave birth to Jesus. Charlemagne’s grandson Charles the Bald presented the relic to Chartres in 876. Roman Catholics felt that the unscathed relic was a sign of encouragement for them to build an even more beautiful cathedral to venerate the Virgin Mary.

Today, the High Gothic style of architecture that dominates the cathedral is the result of 26 years of rebuilding it after the 1194 fire. Highlights of the High Gothic style include elaborate sculptural reliefs, high vaulted ceilings, vast amounts of stained glass, and flying buttresses, which are exterior stone reinforcements necessary for bearing the immense stained glass windows’ incredible weight.



(Left) The 16th-century astronomical clock. (Right) The Coronation of the Virgin Mary is represented in the north transept sculptures.



(Left) On the royal portal of the west façade, elaborate sculptural reliefs depict religious scenes. Christ is enveloped in an ellipse called a mandorla, symbolizing his divinity. Symbols representing the evangelists surround him. (Right) One of the oldest stained glass windows in the cathedral is the “Notre-Dame de la Belle-Verrière,” or “The Blue Virgin” window. The upper window dates from around 1180 and shows the Virgin Mary sitting on a throne as she holds Christ on her lap. His hand gesture signifies a blessing.



(Left) The cathedral demonstrates the evolution of Gothic architecture. Most of its architecture is from the High Gothic period, but early Gothic style can also be observed, such as on the west façade (pictured here with the two towers). (Right) The Last Judgment is shown in the west rose window, which was created around 1215.



HOMESCHOOLING

My Hot Math Mess: Tips for Homeschooling Math

Immerse yourself in the material along with your child from the very beginning.

TRICIA FOWLER

Large, round eyes blankly flitter around the room then squint as a grin spreads across her face. “I don’t know,” she says to the panel of teachers at the Math Bowl in 1989. The young lady made the math team by the skin of her teeth but proved unable to function at all under real pressure.

This hot math mess was me in high school. After a couple of mental blocks during math competitions, I wrote myself off as unable to work with numbers. I chose a major with one math class and graduated confident that pesky math courses were a thing of the past.

It’s really ironic how life turns out. Now, at the age of 48, I have completed K-8 math four times along with multiple semesters of algebra and geometry. Presently, I spend every morning studying Algebra 1 and 2 as the sun is just bursting through our dining room windows. No more am I intimidated by hard problems but energized by them and find myself thrilled when solving a new problem. What happened to my hot math mess? Homeschooling.

Many home-educating families, as well as parents doing math homework with their kids after school, may find themselves in a hot math mess. I know I certainly didn’t start out like the iconic math teacher of my grade school days with a quiet classroom, chalkboard, and straight lines of students. In many ways, our home math class may still look like a hot math mess, but I have convincing testimonies from my first two graduates who have done well in college math courses: Homeschooling math isn’t only possible but rewarding.

After years of experience with my own children, here are some principles you may be able to use in your math time with the kiddos.

April Showers: Family Fun for Hours

Game night is a classic and provides hours of fun.



BARBARA DANZA

With spring here, sunny days come alongside rainy ones. On April shower days, and while you await those May flowers, here are some fun indoor activities to enjoy with your family.

Game Night

The classic rainy day activity can’t be too overrated. Gathering together around a classic board game such as Scrabble, Pictionary, Trivial Pursuit, Monopoly, or a newer game like Hedbandz can provide fun for hours. Serve your family’s favorite finger foods and select some background music to set just the right atmosphere.

Food Bar

Set up a fun fixins bar for everyone to get creative with. Whether you’re making your own pizzas, designing your own ice cream sundaes, topping a giant baked potato, or sampling various types of chili options—the act of personalizing something delicious and then enjoying your creations together is simply a good time.

Movie Marathon

So, it’s raining all day? No problem. Pick a

during the spring months when the hardest concepts usually appear.

We now thoroughly marinate ourselves in whatever is difficult with no stressed-out mom worried about spilling math lessons into the summer break. This principle can be applied no matter how you schedule your school year. If your child isn’t getting a lot at the math level you have chosen, don’t hesitate to go back over what she did the previous year. I will go over this more in the next principle.

The Next Best Thing

Never make math about grades or grade level. This is the hardest concept to sell to parents, especially if they taught in a regular classroom, but it may be the most important principle of all. We all have inconsistencies in our learning rate. I can’t tell you how much stress and distraction it takes off the teacher and the student when both concentrate on the next concept without grade level pressure or fear of a bad grade.

No artificial rewards or stimuli are needed when a child receives the automatic, stimulating “aha” moment of solving a problem. When multiple grade levels are learning side by side, one of your children may unexpectedly get ahead of another. But if grade levels are deemphasized by the parent through supplements or even using another math curriculum, unnecessary pressure is removed, and the child will go farther in math.

Go team! Stagger math activities while teaching all the kids at once, and emphasize teamwork. This is the principle that makes our math lessons look like a hot math mess to outsiders. At our house, our math curriculum ranges from first grade to Algebra 2 with five students around the breakfast table. Our youngest is usually still finishing breakfast, middle children are on more independent work, while the others are collaborating with me. Grading as I go around and round the table gives instant feedback and keeps habitual errors in check.

This means I am often speeding from student to student with math manipulatives and red ink in my wake, switching laundry, and doing breakfast clean up at the same time.

Previously, this bothered me because I saw no benefit in a student baffled by a problem. Now I see it is exhilarating for students to try hard at a problem and succeed on their own! If my kids had been given help instantaneously, there would have been less opportunity for independence. When several kids are stuck at the same time, simply work with one, and the others can move on to the next problem for a moment. Younger students are also given help by their siblings when all the kids do math together. The review and comradery this provides isn’t something I can generate any other way.

Sometimes there is still frustration, but with multiple siblings there to help, it really feels like we are on the same team pulling for each other.

If you decide to teach math at home, I hope some of these tips work for your homeschool as well. Enjoy those kiddos even during your hot math mess!

Tricia Fowler is a Christian homeschooling momma in the Midwest. She currently spends much of her time teaching math, feeding sourdough, and helping with whatever is in season on the hobby farm she shares with her husband and seven children.

trilogy and run with it. Take movie night to a whole new level by theming your snacks, and even decor if you’re crafty, to coincide with a movie trilogy. Some recommendations: “Star Wars” (the original trilogy), “Indiana Jones,” “Lord of the Rings,” “The Chronicles of Narnia,” or “Back to the Future.” It’s hours of rainy day fun that you’ll always remember.

Get Crafty

A rainy day is a great opportunity to tackle a house project the whole family has been interested in or diving into a craft project that everyone would enjoy. Whether you’ve been wanting to repaint the playroom, build a birdhouse for the backyard, or put together a 1,000-piece puzzle, working together on something creative will be a bonding experience.

Travel Down Memory Lane

Spend the day enjoying and reminiscing about your treasured family memories as you go through your family photos and videos. If you’ve been meaning to get photos printed for an album or to display in frames, what better time than a rainy spring afternoon with input from the whole family? Pouring over your history together is a wonderful way to bond.



6 No-Fail Mother’s Day Gift Ideas

BARBARA DANZA

Mother’s Day is right around the corner. It can be challenging to find just the right gift to show moms how much we love and appreciate them.

This year, give Mom something she really wants. If you’re stumped for a Mother’s Day gift idea, here are six simple ones just about any mother would love.



A Clean Home, Garden, or Car

Enlist the whole family in rolling up those sleeves and get to work getting the house thoroughly cleaned up, sprucing up the garden for spring, or cleaning Mom’s car inside and out. Not your thing? Outsource the task to a professional. What Mom wouldn’t love that?



A Night Away

While Mom loves her family more than anything, time alone may be just the rejuvenating experience she needs. Send Mom away, by herself. That’s right—book her a night in a nice hotel or an Airbnb and tell her not to worry about a thing. Reassure her that the kids will be taken care of and the house won’t be a disaster upon her return. Then watch sweet relief fall over her face.



A Spa Day

Moms tend to stick to the bare minimum when it comes to self-care. Book her a day at the spa to enjoy her favorite services, especially those she never springs for on the regular. If you’re not sure, a spa gift card would do the trick nicely.



Not a Finger Lifted

Of course, on Mother’s Day, make sure Mom feels no need to lift a finger. To get this just right, keep up with the tidying, meal preparation, and clean-up before bed. The last thing Mom wants is to wake up to double-duty the day after Mother’s Day.



Handmade Gifts

Encourage the kiddos to get creative and make thoughtful cards and gifts for Mom. More than anything you can buy at a store, handmade offerings tend to be the most treasured and meaningful gifts to receive.



Your Sincere Thanks

Most of all, don’t let Mother’s Day go by without expressing to Mom just how much she means to you and how much you appreciate all that she does. A heartfelt acknowledgment and recognition for what she likely considers her most important work in the world will be deeply appreciated.



FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

Duty

by Ralph Waldo Emerson

So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man;
When Duty whispers low “Thou must,”
The youth replies, “I can.”

WHY WAS THE ARCHAEOLOGIST UPSET?

HIS CAREER WAS IN RUINS

Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.

SENECA (4 B.C.–A.D. 65), ANCIENT ROMAN PHILOSOPHER



THE TITANIC SETS SAIL

On April 10, 1912, the RMS Titanic set off for its maiden voyage. As it left Southampton Harbor in England, it narrowly missed hitting another ship: the SS New York. The legendary vessel continued on to stops in Cherbourg in France and Queenstown in Ireland. After that, it began its journey across the Atlantic to New York.

Of course, the voyage ended tragically, when the Titanic hit an iceberg on the night of April 14. It’s estimated that between 1,490 and 1,635 perished at sea, becoming one of the most infamous disasters in history.

By Aidan Danza, age 14

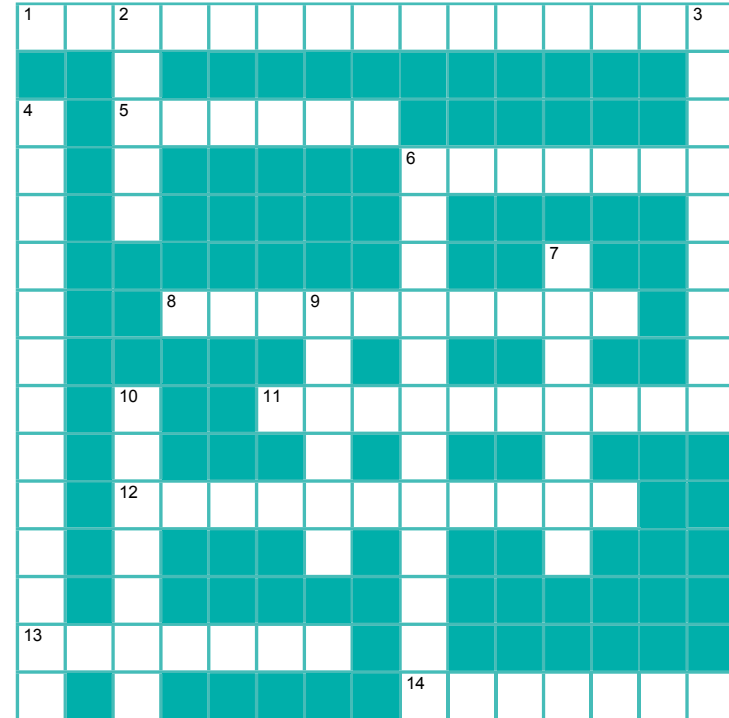
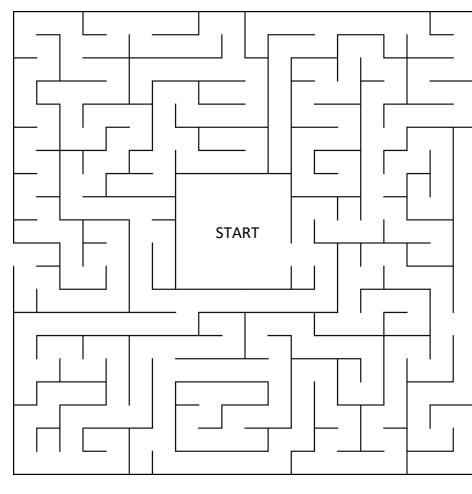
THE AMERICAN ROBIN

The American robin was named after its continental alter ego, the European robin, because the American colonists thought they looked similar. Famously, their favorite food is the earthworm, pulled up in the characteristic robin way: running a few steps, stopping, cocking its head to see the worm, then pulling it up and eating it. Worms will mostly be eaten in the morning; robins prefer to eat worms for breakfast while having fruits for lunch and dinner. Other favorite breakfasts include grubs, caterpillars, grasshoppers, and other insects, while for dinner they will eat a wide variety of berries. One study even suggested that they like the taste of insects and fruit together, since they seem to prefer insect-infested fruits to clean ones. Robins live all across the country—year-round in places like New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, present only in winter in the deep south, and present only in the spring and summer in Canada. Usually, the American robin is mostly an American and Canadian bird, only small numbers winter in Mexico. Robins enjoy living almost anywhere, but especially in suburbs, parks, and woodlands. In areas of expansive wilderness, robins actually prefer to live near humans.

In the spring, it’s time to nest for a robin. A female will select a nesting territory, building the bulk of the nest with assistance from the male, and mainly take care of the eggs and young, with assistance from the male. When the young fledge, however, it’s the male that takes care of the “teenage” robins while the female takes care of a second brood. The nest is of a very interesting design: It’s built with long grasses, twigs, and feathers woven into a cup. Then the nest will be reinforced with mud on the inside, and lined with feathers and fine grass to cushion the bright blue eggs.

The robin is probably the most iconic bird of the spring. They are mostly migratory but they return in the spring, bringing their robin-y joy with them, as they sing very loudly every morning just before dawn.

AMAZING ESCAPES!



USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS (+, -, AND X) to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one “unique” solution but, there may also be “equivalent” solutions. For example: 6 + (7 X 3) + 1 = 28 and 1+ (7 X 3) + 6 = 28

Easy puzzle 1

2	8		
24			
1	6		
+	-	x	÷

Solution For Easy 1
9 + 2 = (1 + 8)
8 × (1 - 2 - 9)

Medium puzzle 1

9	16		
24			
1	13		
+	-	x	÷

Solution for Medium 1
(1 - 9) × (1 - 6)

Hard puzzle 1

23	35		
24			
20	32		
+	-	x	÷

Solution for Hard 1
02 - 82 - 28 + 98

Across

1 Plaque remover (15)
5 Housetop laborer (6)
6 “Mario Bros.” occupation (7)
8 Certain gardener (10)
11 Tax professional (10)

- ### Down
- 2 Surgeon’s assistant (5)
3 Counselor (9)
4 Tests blood (13)
6 Freud, for one (12)
7 One who knows the drill (7)
9 The “D” in M.D. (6)
10 A first responder (7)
12 One who can see right through you? (11)
13 Business _____ (problem solver) (7)
14 Every classroom needs one (7)

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