

Potluck!

The magazine that eats!
September 2025
Issue 010

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a purple long-sleeved shirt and khaki pants, stands on a green lawn. She is holding two blue and silver pom-poms in her outstretched arms. She has a lanyard with a badge around her neck. In the background, there is a modern building with large windows and columns, and a large green tree. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

Ms. Hunt!

by Jay Peters

Potluck! Potluck!

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Artworks by
**Daria
Sunduk!**



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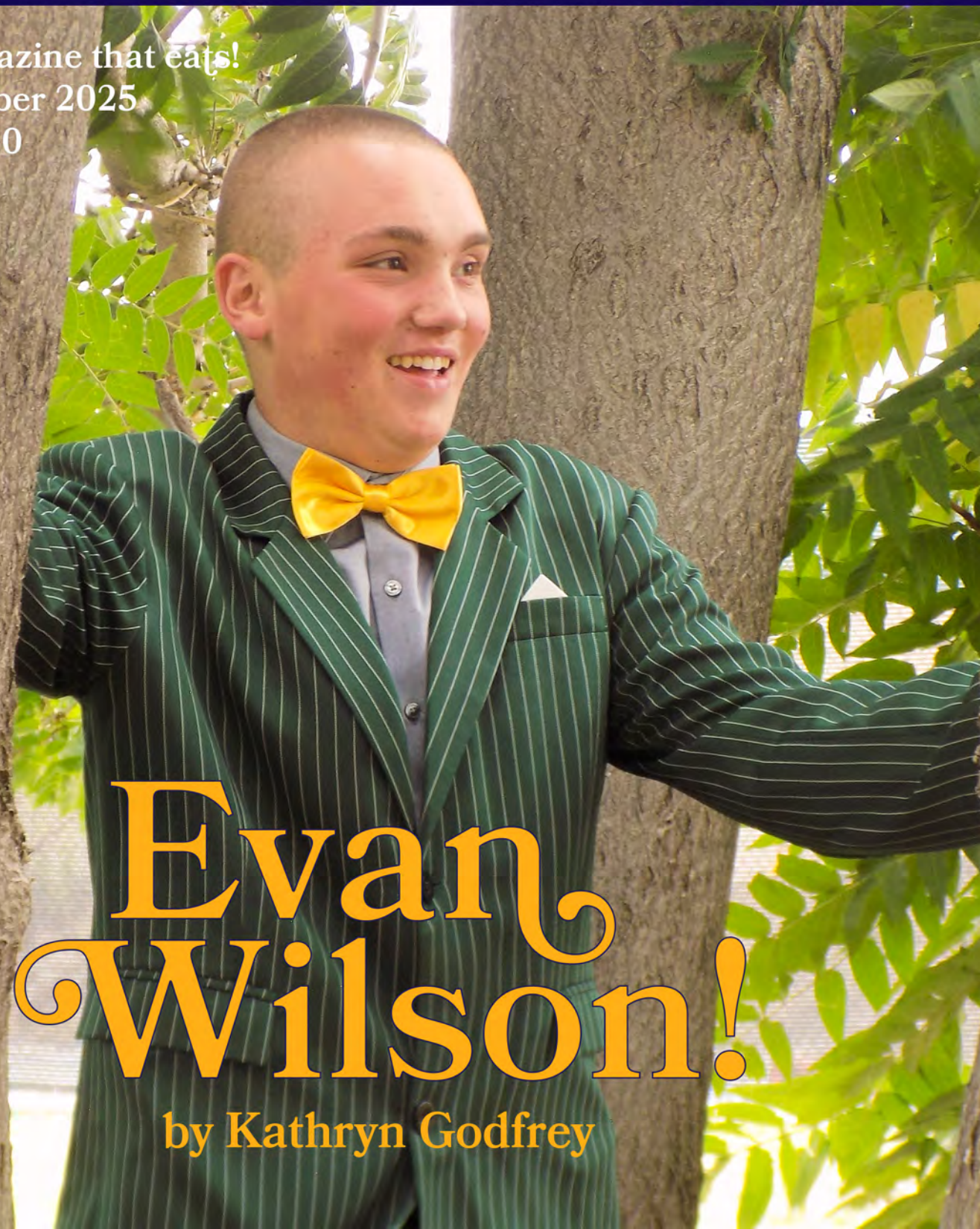
**Frutoso
Chavez!**



Our new Head of School talks
the Marines, Dali—and, yes, parking

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Evan Wilson!

by Kathryn Godfrey

Vol II, No. 1

Potluck Magazine!

“Everybody has an amazing aspect to them.”
- Ms. Diana Hunt, *Potluck*

Our Cooks

Founder *and* Editor in-Chief
Art Director
Photo Editor
Advisor

Nicholas Ziegler
Arden Almy
Justine Zylla
Dr. Darryl Ellison

Our other wonderful cooks are...

Khira Anderson, Lara Arandas, Kam Brodnax,
Vanessa Hall, Isabel Harris, Jackson Hedberg,
James Merkle, Sophia Reisdorph, Noah Rittenhouse,
Adam Stark, Evan Wilson, *and* Parker Wolters

Nutritional Facts

Potluck is the student magazine of Colorado Early Colleges Douglas County North, covering news, fiction, poetry, interviews, and more. *Potluck* accepts submissions from all(!!!) students and staff in the school, and would currently prefer to have submissions directed to Nicholas Ziegler or Dr. Darryl Ellison.

The views expressed in *Potluck* are those of their respective authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of Colorado Early Colleges.

The team at *Potluck* is very grateful to be doing this work, and hopes that you, reader, enjoy this issue. Eat up!

Chef's Special!

or, a Letter from the Editor;
or, She Wanted Her Life to Matter



Hello, everyone! Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, welcome to the tenth issue and second year of CEC's student magazine, *Potluck*! I'm the Founder and Editor in-Chief of this publication, Nicholas Ziegler¹; you may know me for being very tall, or for storming into your English class, or for my gorgeous, God-given looks². In any case, I'm happy to be here, and I'm happy that you're here! Thank you for picking up a copy of *Potluck*; we hope you enjoy this one.

I'd like to announce here that our previous advisor for *Potluck*, Dr. Jane Ono, is sadly no longer attached to this project. We wish her all the best and will miss her dearly, and welcome our new advisor, Dr. Darryl Ellison!

While making this issue, I've thought a lot about Eva Perón—actually, scratch that. While making this issue, I've thought a lot about Madonna. Madonna portrayed Perón, the Argentinian political icon, in *Evita*, the 1996 movie musical following Perón's rise as an actress, marriage to President Juan Perón, and death from cervical cancer at the age of 33. You may know *Evita* for “Don't Cry For Me, Argentina”, its centerpiece song; the rest of the movie is perfectly fine.

What really sticks with me is not *Evita*³, but “The *Evita* Diaries”, Madonna's journal of the film's production, which was later published in *Vanity Fair*. It's a very fascinating article; you learn a lot about Madonna's thoughts as she works on (or, rather, obsesses over) the film—and, quite frankly, it's a lot more

interesting than the film itself. I'd like to direct your attention to the entry from February 8, 1996, in which Madonna imagines she *is* Eva Perón, and wonders how it might have felt to know you would die so young:

“I could finally understand the feverish pace at which Evita lived during her last few years⁴. She wanted her life to matter. She didn't have time for the bureaucracies of the government. She needed results. The idea of death is not so horrible if one can leave behind a legacy, and Eva did not want to be remembered as a girl from the sticks, or a B actress, or the wife of the president. She wanted to be remembered for her goodness. The desire of someone who has lived her life completely misunderstood.”

“She wanted her life to matter.” Those six words have been moving inside my brain for the past weeks.

I'm writing this on Friday, September 12th, only a few days before I plan to publish this issue. I have been fighting for my life in the trenches (Adobe InDesign and Microsoft Outlook), as I do the final few tasks needed to get this issue out. Yesterday, I stayed up until 6 AM in a weird, barely lucid, magazine-designing stupor, where the only music I could stand to listen to was “Nothing Really Matters” by—guess who?—Madonna. I am, in a word, tired, and you're probably wondering why I've chosen to do this. And part of it is that I'm a little crazy—much like Madge dreaming of Perón, I've ended up dreaming

1 For more about me, turn to my interview with Dr. James Ziegler on p. 46.
2 You may also know me for my massive ego.
3 Eva and Juan Perón are both very beloved and very controversial figures in Argentinian history. Juan Perón has been often criticized for using authoritarian tactics during his presidency, as well as protecting and sympathizing with Nazi war criminals. This is all very important to our understanding of the Peróns, but it's also stuff that I, a dumb American, am not equipped to discuss. Please direct your attention, as I have mine, primarily to the quote from Madonna that concludes this paragraph.
4 In the last few years of her life, Eva Perón created the Eva Perón Foundation, a social welfare charitable foundation; founded the Female Peronist party, Argentina's first large female political party; and, although she would decline the invitation, was nominated for vice-president during Juan Perón's 1952 campaign.

Vol II, No. 1

about article submissions and email threads—but I’d like to think that there’s something deeper at play. There are many different things I want in life; I want money, power, friends, love. I desperately, desperately want to go to sleep. But when it comes to *Potluck*, I do the work that I do because I want my life to matter. I want the work that I do here to have an impact on others, to affect them. I don’t want to make work that can just be quickly flipped through and put back down⁵; I look for fun photography, hard questions, and weird pitches because I want to make something more interesting than that. I want to make something that can wake you up. I want to make work that matters. *I* want to matter.

I suppose that’s always been the goal of *Potluck*, but the desire to make something that matters has become much more important to me in this second year—my last making this magazine. In about eight months, I will graduate, and another person(s) will take on the job of Editor in-Chief. A big goal of mine for *Potluck* this year is to build a staff that I’m confident can take my place. That means that this magazine has to, in some form, matter to the school, or at least matter to enough people that this project can last.

While making this issue, one thing I’ve kept doing is storming into English classrooms and freshman advisory; I feel that my keeping in touch with the younger grades will make them more interested in the magazine. So, I’ve come in with a short sales pitch and a smile, trying my best to introduce myself to every student and ask them: “What are you passionate about? What do you do in your free time?” I’ve gotten many answers to that question—sports, cheer, robot cockroaches—and I always respond by telling them that, as long as they can do it by our deadline, they can take that passion and write about it in *Potluck*

5 He says, knowing that, like, two people are going to read this Editor’s Letter.
6 Reese Manlapig, myself, and Ms. Diana Hunt, respectively.

Magazine.

Many, many people took me up on that offer, which has led to an issue all about obsessions: white-tail deer, short-hair rugs, *KPop Demon Hunters*, the band Stray Kids. I always like to think of *Potluck* as being like going to a party you know no one at and making a game of talking to as many strangers as you can; this issue is like those strangers pulling you to the side, leaning in, and asking, “Hey, have you ever heard ‘Soda Pop’?” Beyond those pieces, other preoccupations that come up as well; multiple interview subjects in this issue spoke on feeling out of place, either due to being a second-generation immigrant, or being a Black person in a largely white city, or being from New England⁶. This issue is about a lot of things—for one blissful paragraph, it becomes about evil talking Crocs—but more than anything, this is an issue about the things that matter—both the “frivolous” and the “serious”. Our contributors cared enough about something that they wrote hundreds of words about their subject. Making this issue, I’ve worried a lot about whether we’re covering the important subjects—the things that really affect people. Now, at the end of the process, I’d like to think that anything can be important; if it matters to one person, it matters to *Potluck*. And, hopefully, if it matters to *Potluck*, it matters to you.

I, and my wonderful team, hope to keep working to make fun, interesting work that helps brighten up our school. I’ll keep my promise. Please, please don’t keep your distance.

Love,
Nicholas Ziegler,
Founder and Editor in-Chief.



First Course!

News, Essays, and Nonfiction

Our Menu

Reese Manlapig , by Mr. Thomas Wilson	12
<i>KPop Demon Hunters</i> , by Jackson Hedberg	18
Ms. Diana Hunt , by Jay Peters	20
Palestine , an editorial by Unknown	28
Stray Kids , by Yashvi Mehta	30
Evan Wilson , by Kathryn Godfrey	32
Pop Culture , by Isabel Harris	40
Short Hair Rugs , by Saigen Schillings	42
Nicholas Ziegler , by Dr. James Ziegler	46
Deer , by Rachel Ragain	56
Mr. Frutoso Chavez , by the students of CEC	60

You Seem Stubborn and Tough

CEC Sophomore Reese Manlapig
meets with Mr. Thomas Wilson to talk
DECA, Filipino identity, and finding
her place in this difficult world



**“I really
want to
learn
Tagalog.”**

- Reese Manlapig



*Interview by MR. THOMAS WILSON.
Photography by ADDIE SIPES.*

MR. THOMAS WILSON: Welcome in, Reese. First question— you survived your freshman year here. What was your takeaway? I know you have a lot of friends going to other schools. What was it like coming here and starting a whole new social group?

REESE MANLAPIG: I think it was really difficult for me to find the right people to be with. I struggled to be with the right people and just find people who would support me and lift me up instead of bringing me down.

WILSON: That’s kind of a universal issue, especially in the first year at a new place, that often the people you meet first aren’t necessarily the best ones to hang around. How are you adjusting now that you’re starting your second year? Do you feel like your feet are more underneath you?

MANLAPIG: I think I’m just focusing more on academics than on my social group. I have a few friends here, but most of my closer friends are at different schools.

WILSON: The new world we’re living in definitely makes it easier to maintain social connections across schools, with FaceTime and messaging apps. As far as things you’re doing here at CEC, what are your favorite activities to be involved in?

MANLAPIG: I think DECA was really fun to start with my freshman year, and continuing with it through high school has been a good experience. I’m also excited to be doing Student Council this year.

WILSON: That’s fantastic. Are you going to run for an officer position or anything like that?

MANLAPIG: Technically, I’m already an officer, since everyone in the Student Council class is an officer.

WILSON: So you would be an officer in both DECA and Student Council—that’s got to feel pretty good. I know your older sister came here, which is probably a large part of why you chose this school. What did she think of her time in the CEC family?

MANLAPIG: She was kind of stuck in the middle of COVID, so it was harder for her to really be in person and make high school connections since she was online for the first two years. She spent most of her time off campus. I think it did help her academically, though, and gave her more of a footing in what she wanted to do with her career.

WILSON: Many students here are second-generation, with parents who are immigrants. How do you feel that experience—having one foot in one culture and one in another—affects your day-to-day life?

MANLAPIG: It’s hard trying to understand how my parents grew up, because it was so different. I struggle with my cultural identity—between not really knowing my cultural roots and growing up here, which is very different.

WILSON: Do you feel like the smaller size of this school helps with that?

MANLAPIG: I feel like there aren’t many people here that I fully relate to, since my upbringing is tied to how my parents grew up. My friends aren’t children of immigrants, so they don’t completely understand where I’m coming from—the expectations, the rules, and how I was raised.

WILSON: Do your parents allow you to be more in the culture you’re living in, or do they hold pretty strongly to their traditions?

based learning credits, which would allow students to gain experience through internships. I think you’d be a great candidate for that. What are your goals for your remaining time at CEC?

MANLAPIG: I’m excited to branch out more, make sure I have fun in high school, and also stay strong with academics so I have all my credits and get into a good school.

WILSON: Absolutely. I’d be surprised if you didn’t achieve whatever goals you set—you seem stubborn and tough, and that combination gets you very far. Thanks for letting me interview you, Reese.

MANLAPIG: Thank you! 🍌

MANLAPIG: They definitely hold strong to some traditions, but they’re trying to be more open and understanding, since they’ve been here about 20 years.

WILSON: If you could change something about the school—add or remove activities—what would you suggest?

MANLAPIG: I don’t really think there’s anything to add. There are already a bunch of different inclusive clubs, so I don’t think the school could do more.

WILSON: Our school offers Spanish, but in the Philippines, the main language is Tagalog. Are you pursuing becoming more fluent?

MANLAPIG: I can understand and translate in my head if it’s spoken to me, but my parents never fully taught me to speak it. I really want to learn, especially if I’m thinking about going back to the Philippines for a while.

WILSON: That could be a great advantage for you, especially with your business focus. Have you looked into whether ACC or our sister programs offer language classes?

MANLAPIG: I haven’t really thought of that, but it’s a good idea.

WILSON: What would you say is your greatest academic strength?

MANLAPIG: I think I’m well-rounded. I don’t have to study too much—I understand concepts easily. I don’t have to sit at my desk for hours to make things stick.

WILSON: Are you still interested in pursuing finance?

MANLAPIG: Yes, I am.

WILSON: Colorado is proposing new work-

KPop Demon Hunters!

Jackson Hedberg takes a look at the hit movie of the summer

KPop Demon Hunters. You either “obsessed-K-Pop-fan” love it or you just... love it. But either way, this movie of the summer of 2025 has a pretty deep theme that is incredibly important to discuss. In this article, we’ll dive deeper into this theme.

Don’t judge a book by its cover. That’s the statement you hear when you look at something and you judge it on how it looks. But remember, something might not always be the case despite how it looks. That is the theme of the K-pop movie musical, the movie of the summer of 2025, the movie many people have watched and loved since its release in June of 2025, *KPop Demon Hunters*. (Which, by the way, you should watch if you haven’t already, it’s incredibly fun.) The movie—featuring singing, dancing, twists and turns, and more—shows the deep theme. The main character, Rumi, who is the lead singer of a K-pop girl group, is not who you think she would be. The movie shows how you shouldn’t judge not only your enemies by their covers, but also sometimes your own friends or even your family, because you might not know what they actually are like. Judging a book by its cover means just making assumptions that lead you to the wrong path of what you think of someone. So, when you watch the movie (either for the first time or again), remember

that the characters have more than what they show the audience. Don’t make assumptions on some characters. You can have a first impression, but it should change over time. So, in conclusion, this movie is fun and while you are free to belt to “Golden” to your heart’s content, the theme is not to be ignored.

When I watched the movie for the first time with my family on August 2nd, 2025, I didn’t expect this movie to have a seriously strong theme. I loved the songs from both HUNTR/X and the Saja Boys because they had very catchy beats, were fun to vibe along and even sing along to (even though I didn’t sing any of the songs while watching the movie). I would say my Top 3 songs would be “Golden”, “Soda Pop”, and “Your Idol”. “Golden” is a great song and is great with the story of the early life of the HUNTR/X girls and their struggles. “Soda Pop” is unbelievably catchy, and I often find myself listening to that song on repeat for quite a while. And when I first heard “Your Idol” while watching the movie, I felt chills because of how crazy the melody goes, and the Saja Boys in their demon forms while they were dancing to the song was crazy for me to watch. I do want to give an honorable mention to “What It Sounds Like” and “How It’s Done”. And it wasn’t just the songs. The little things had

a big impact. For example, when Rumi got exposed as a half-demon to everybody during the Idol Awards section of the movie, that made my skin crawl, because during Rumi’s early childhood, Celine was trying to hide Rumi’s demon marks from everybody, meaning that Celine was actually not the person I thought she was. At first, I thought she was a protective caretaker for Rumi and then Zoe and Mira, but it turns out that Celine is actually an assumptive, exclusive person who was trying to make Rumi who she assumed

she would be. That kind of ruins Celine’s reputation for me. Also, when Jinu told Rumi his backstory, I got chills because up until that point in the movie, I thought Jinu was a demon who was the lead singer of the Saja Boys. Turns out he was a good person before he left his family, so that was a turning moment in the story. Overall, I love it, and I would recommend it to anyone who is an avid movie watcher and/or a K-Pop fan. 🍷



Photo courtesy of Netflix



Miss Hunt

by Jay Peters

**“I’m not
cruel or
anything;
I’m just
different.”**

- Ms. Diana Hunt



When Potluck asked Ms. Diana Hunt who she wanted to interview her for this issue, she didn't yet have an answer. She felt that people knew her for one thing or another, but not the full picture. Of course, Ms. Hunt is known for many things—her pom-poms, her jumping, and her sometimes off-kilter approach to teaching math. But as you can see in this interview, in which she sounds out on topics ranging from her fear of rejection to Colorado's blissful weather, there's much more to her than meets the eye. Leave it to Jay Peters to get the full scoop.

Interview by JAY PETERS. Photography by JUSTINE ZYLLA.

JAY PETERS: Ms. Hunt, how are you?

MS. DIANA HUNT: Pretty good!

PETERS: Alright. I have a set of eight questions for you from Nick [Ziegler], and I have a couple of interesting things of note that I would like to incorporate into this. What are your favorite hobbies? I noticed on your LinkedIn page that some of your causes are animal welfare and stuff. Do you think that ties into your hobbies?

HUNT: Well, my hobbies have changed. I was an avid climber for almost 20 years. I competed, I ice climbed, I rock climbed not only indoors, but I've learned traditional climbing, which is way different than sport climbing. My biggest accomplishment there was the Grand Teton. I love to crochet, those kind of artsy things. I love to work on my car and the garden and woodworking, and I used to donate my time to the [parrot welfare organization] Gabriel Foundation in Elizabeth, but it's just too far now. When I retire, I plan to do a lot of volunteer work for animal rights.

PETERS: Alright. Next up, we have some

more stuff involved with your career. So, what made you want to be a math teacher?

HUNT: Well, I always, always liked numbers—always [laughs], and I didn't know what I could do with that love. I was always very hands-on; my first job was when I was 12, and it was a woodworking job. I made it through high school, and because of my love for woodworking, my stepfather said, "Hey, go to machinist school." So I went to machinist school and I became an aircraft parts inspector-slash-machinist. When I got my degree, yes, I wanted to work as an engineer, but I was like, "I wanna teach." Specifically, I wanted to teach engineering because it's, to me, a beautiful application of mathematics. But, unfortunately, here in the middle of the country, we don't have the direct-transfer programs from a community college to a university [to earn a bachelor's degree], like they do in New England. And I didn't have a PhD, I was qualified to teach math, so here I am.

PETERS: So you grew up in New England, then?

HUNT: I did. I was born in Maine. We moved to Massachusetts when I was 12, 13. I don't remember exactly, it was that summer. And I lived in all states but Rhode Island, worked in all states but Rhode Island and Vermont, went to school in upper-state New York—"upper" as in twenty, fifteen miles from the Canadian border.

PETERS: Ooh! Very upper state.

HUNT: Yeah, yeah.

PETERS: Yeah!

HUNT: [Laughing] Everybody's thinks Albany is upper-state. I'm like, "No, it's only halfway."

PETERS: Yeah. [Laughs] I was thinking more

like Syracuse, but that's not very upstate, honestly. So what made you want to come to Colorado, then?

HUNT: When I left the university, I worked for General Electric, and it was in the process of merging, being bought out by [the manufacturing company] Martin Marietta, I think it was. We had a choice to stay in that location, or we could go to New Hampshire and work for Martin Marietta. I went to New Hampshire on what they called temporary duty. I was looking [for another position] because it was only six months and there was a job opening, there were several. So I came out to Denver and I interviewed for, like, five different jobs. I had been to the Grand Teton after my bachelor's degree and I was like, "[Gasps] I want to live here." [laughs] So I took a job with Lockheed Martin [the merged company of Martin Marietta and Lockheed Corporation] in Warton Canyon and—now I forgot the question [laughs]—hence, I've been here since '96.

PETERS: Nice.

HUNT: And I'm still here, because I love it here. The weather is amazing.

PETERS: Well, you get the best of both. It's not too cold, but it's not too hot, but it's still cold and hot.

HUNT: And there's no god-awful humidity—

PETERS: Oh my gosh!

HUNT: —and all those little—ugh!—those little mosquitoes and the black flies!

PETERS: And the bugs are huge in those humid areas, too. So, then, who has been your biggest role model throughout your life?

HUNT: Hmm. Y'know, that's a good question.

PETERS: You can do multiple if it helps.

HUNT: Yeah, I was gonna say different people for different reasons. My mom, because of her perseverance and all the integrity and values and discipline that she instilled in me. My stepfather, because he developed my curiosity. Some of my teachers, because they opened my eyes to a deeper understanding and love for mathematics. Obviously, engineers I've worked with because I've just wowed. I'm like, "You're way, way, way too smart." [laughs]

PETERS: Engineering is hard.

HUNT: And you know, some of my students just wow me. Many of them, many of them. As far as I'm concerned, if you're willing to open your eyes, there is somebody or somebodies to make the world a better place and inspire you, whether it be their positive attitude or the example that they set. I mean, everybody has an amazing aspect to them.

PETERS: Absolutely. I agree so much. So piggybacking off of that last question—kind of—what would you say you were like in high school?

HUNT: Oh! [Laughs]

PETERS: [Laughs]

HUNT: Well, I've always been an introvert, and of course, I went through trying to be in the popularity contest, realizing I can't win it. I was very, very disciplined and very well behaved [laughs] my freshman and sophomore year. And then, like any typical teenager, I got my heart broken, didn't do the right things, and kind of went off the path. My senior year was really bad. [Laughs] My parents got divorced, my brother got in trouble, and I just became a recluse. I did! It was what it was.

PETERS: Things happen—

Queen

HUNT: Exactly.

PETERS: –and you’ve just got to get through ‘em.

HUNT: I mean, it makes me sad but...

PETERS: It happened. Things happen. What other questions are there? What’s your biggest fear?

HUNT: My biggest fear? Oh, goodness. Well, even though I’m a climber [*Laughs*], I have a very big fear of heights.

PETERS: That’s ironic.

HUNT: Yeah, I can’t tell you how many times halfway up the cliff, [*whistles*] just water-works. [*Laughs*] I have a fear of being rejected. I really, really do, because I try so hard to honor differences. I really, really do. And I know I’m different, okay? [*laughs*] And for people not to do that for me, it hurts me.

PETERS: Yeah! Absolutely.

HUNT: You know, I’m not cruel or anything like that; I’m just different. And part of it is, New England is way different than out here. The way people communicate, how they establish culture, how and when and what they share, and it’s just, it’s very, very different.

PETERS: Alright, last question that I have for you is a pretty abstract one. What do you think the meaning of life is?

HUNT: Oh, goodness!

PETERS: [*Laughs*]

HUNT: The meaning of life. Well, I personally think life is a journey. I think it’s an opportunity to explore and learn and self-reflect. I would wish for everybody that they’re a lifelong

learner. We have this beautiful world around us, and we need to get out there! [*Laughs*]
And this whole technology thing makes my head hurt.

PETERS: Oh, yeah.

HUNT: You know, I didn’t have that kind of technology when I grew up. And I see such a lack of loving nature, and these natural things. I don’t like the artificial stimulation.

PETERS: So, life is a journey.

HUNT: Yeah, it is.

PETERS: I agree.

HUNT: It doesn’t mean it’s going to be good often–[*laughs*]

PETERS: [*Laughs*]

HUNT: –but it doesn’t have to be.

PETERS: What interesting story have you ever read where nothing bad happens? None of them.

HUNT: It doesn’t work that way!

PETERS: Well, so those are all the questions that I have for you today. Thank you for your time.

HUNT: Oh, you’re so welcome! 🍋



“Staying Silent Only Adds Flame to the Fire”

An editorial on Palestine
by Unknown

On August 31st the IAGS (International Association of Genocide Scholars) officially deemed the atrocities Israel has been committing against Gazan citizens as a genocide. To properly understand the gravity of this recognition, one must understand the meaning of genocide and the unstable history between Palestine and Israel.

What is Genocide

Defined in House Bill 20- 1333, genocide is considered the crime of destroying “in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group”. This can be done in multiple ways such as “killing, causing serious bodily

or emotional harm, purposely inflicting on the conditions of life with intent to bring destruction, ensuing measures to prevent childbirth, or forcibly transitioning children of one group to another.” All these measures have been pushed onto Palestinians to the point we’ve lost track of the official death toll or missing persons with the estimated count being 60,000 since October 7th alone.

History Between Palestine and Israel

In the 1900s, Palestine was a part of the Ottoman Empire where Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived alongside one another. However, after the defeat of the Empire, Brit-

ain took over control of the now known Palestine during WW1. Arabs and Jews residing in Palestine grew rigid of each other following the UK’s agreement to “establishing a national home for the Jewish people within Palestine.” The Jewish argued they had a “historical connection with the land” however Palestinian Arabs claimed they too had a historical link to the land refusing to move. Britain said it was their right to continue residing there and would be protected. Over time the number of Jews immigrating into the area grew with the fleeing of the Holocaust in Europe.

“In 1947, with the growing violence between the Arabs and Jews, the UN voted for Palestine to be split between into separate Jewish and Arab states.” The Arab nations weren’t fond of this plan saying that it “gave the Jews more land”; meanwhile the UK decided to withdraw May 14, 1948, and leave the problem to the UN. “Jewish leaders in Palestine declared themselves an independent state, Israel, hours before the British rule subsided.” The day after declaring themselves a separate state the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 began.

Jumping to 2007, “Israel imposed a blockade on Gaza as Hamas grew to power.” They also occupy the West Bank and East Jerusalem which have been rightful territories for Arab Palestinians. “On October 9th, following the October 7th attack by Hamas, Israel proceeded to impose a total blockade on the Gaza Strip.”

How This Affects You

With the use of weaponry and the creation of nuclear warfare the exasperated amount of bombs Israel uses against Palestinians directly impacts climate change. Ongoing research over the years has proven that the uranium used in said weapons “deplete into our farmland affecting the soil.”

These pollutants often can cause diseases such as cancer and can last over a thousand years, not just affecting the world now but will affect generations to come.

How to Help

It may seem hopeless with the horror of the situation, but there are always ways to help. You can have a say on the right side of history just by doing simple things. Some of these include donating to organizations looking to help feed Palestinians, spreading awareness on this topic, openly supporting Palestinians, educating yourself or the people around you, etc. It may seem worthless or that all hope is lost, but staying silent now only adds flame to the fire. You have the power to make a difference. 🍉

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Stray Kids



Yashvi Mehta on the next big KPop group

The Members and Their SKZOO Characters

The group consists of Bang Chan, Lee Know, Changbin, Hyunjin, Han, Felix, Seungmin, and I.N. Each member carries a distinct personality that is reflected not only in their performances but also through their SKZOO animal characters, beloved by fans worldwide:

- Bang Chan → Wolf Chan (wolf): A dependable and empathetic leader who anchors the group.
- Lee Know → Leebit (rabbit): Playful yet caring, known for sharp wit and subtle warmth.
- Changbin → Dwaekki (pig rabbit): Intense

and powerful on stage, softhearted and humorous off stage.

- Hyunjin → Jiniret (ferret/fox-like): Graceful, artistic, and expressive, embodying elegance in performance.
- Han → Han Quokka (quokka): Charismatic and energetic, balancing humor with lyrical depth.
- Felix → Bbokari (chick): A deep-voiced performer whose bright, nurturing demeanor contrasts his fierce stage presence.
- Seungmin → PuppyM (puppy): Grounded and reliable, providing stability and consistency.

- I.N → FoxI.Ny (fox-fawn mix): The youngest, symbolizing growth and curiosity while bringing fresh energy.

Musical Innovation and Global Recognition

Since debuting in 2018, Stray Kids have set themselves apart through their hands-on involvement in songwriting and production, led by the in-house unit 3RACHA (Bang Chan, Changbin, Han). Their discography consistently explores themes of self-identity, resilience, and empowerment, blending genres with fearless experimentation. In 2024, the group released “Chk Chk Boom” from their *ATE* mini-album. The track gained international attention with cameos from Ryan Reynolds and Hugh Jackman in the music video, further cementing their pop-culture presence. It quickly surpassed 100 million views, marking their 14th video to achieve the milestone. Their dominATE World Tour (2024–2025) showcased the group’s global draw. With 54 shows across 34 cities and 27 stadiums, the tour attracted more than 2.15 million attendees and earned \$260 million in revenue. Iconic venues such as SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles, Stade de France in Paris, and Stadio Olimpico in Rome were filled to capacity, making Stray Kids the first K-pop act to headline several of these stadiums. The release of the 2025 full album *KARMA*, featuring the title track “CEREMONY,” further reinforced their dominance. The album surpassed 2 million sales within 24 hours and over 3 million in its first week.

It debuted at number one on the Billboard 200, marking Stray Kids as the first group in history to achieve seven consecutive number-one debuts on the chart.

Landmark Achievements and Cultural Impact

In June 2025, Stray Kids became the

first K-pop group to light the Empire State Building in New York. The building glowed burgundy to honor their partnership with Musicians on Call, an initiative focused on the healing power of music. This event not only highlighted their cultural influence but also emphasized their dedication to meaningful causes.

Their global reach continues to expand, driven by a combination of artistry, innovation, and fan engagement. Alongside their musical dominance, the members have also become defining figures in fashion, luxury, and lifestyle campaigns: Bang Chan as a global ambassador for Fendi, Lee Know for Gucci, Hyunjin for Versace and Cartier, Felix for Louis Vuitton, HERA Beauty, UNICEF Korea, Tamburins, Atissu, Gong cha, Samsung, and Gentle Monster, Seungmin for Lotte Duty Free, and I.N for Bottega Veneta and Damiani. The group has also served as ambassadors for Pepro and participated in the UV Biore Korea campaign. Collectively, Stray Kids have represented Tommy Hilfiger on global stages, including the Met Gala. Each release pushes boundaries while maintaining authenticity, ensuring both critical acclaim and commercial success.

Stray Kids and the Future of K-Pop

With consistent chart-topping releases, record-breaking tours, and international recognition, Stray Kids have established themselves as one of the defining groups of their generation. Their ability to balance individuality with unity, creativity with mass appeal, and artistry with global influence sets them apart as a force shaping the future of K-pop. Stray Kids everywhere all around the world is not just a lyric but a reality. The group has transcended language and geography, positioning themselves as the next global phenomenon in music. 🍕

“The last three years
have gone so fast.”

An Interview with *the* Yellow Crocs!

Evan Wilson talks faith,
flying, and footwear
with Kathryn Godfrey



Friendship

Evan Wilson stays busy. As the President of Rotary, a Cadet Major in Civil Air Patrol, and putting up with Eli Murry, the senior knows how to keep a packed schedule. Luckily for us, he found some time to meet with his friend Kathryn Godfrey to talk about “being a shining and smiling face with [his] bright yellow Crocs.”

Interview by KATHRYN GODFREY. Photography by ELIZABETH and RA-CHAELE BENCH. Special thanks to JONNY JORDANO and KALEB POLLARD.

KATHRYN GODFREY: Let’s start out. What is your name?

EVAN WILSON: Evan Wilson.

GODFREY: Welcome, Evan.

WILSON: Thank you. Thanks for having me on this very informal podcast, whatever.

GODFREY: [Laughs] Alright, well, first question. It’s a difficult one. How old are you?

WILSON: I am 17 years of age.

GODFREY: [Laughs] “Of age.” In May, right?

WILSON: Yup, in May, I’ll be turning 18. [Looks something up] I am roughly 207 months old.

GODFREY: Cool. Tell us some of the things you do at school.

WILSON: I am President of Young Rotary club, which I joined in the fall of [my] junior year under the amazing president Jacey [Cohen]. I also take part in NHS [National Honors Society], and I’m an informal member of Student Council and Student Ambassadors. Oh, I am also a proud member of Senior Squad.

GODFREY: So, you do a lot then.

WILSON: Oh, I also have to put up with Kathryn Godfrey. And Eli Murry.

GODFREY: Yeah, you know, I agree with that one.

WILSON: I also accidentally TA for teachers in their classrooms.

GODFREY: Just by being there?

WILSON: Yeah. I feel like I do more [at school] though.

GODFREY: I’m not sure. Well, how about outside of school: what do you do?

WILSON: I am part of Civil Air Patrol, which is a youth leadership program that is nationwide. We are also considered auxillary Air Force. Teenagers develop leadership skills that they can use in the military or elsewhere to succeed. We also take part in emergency services, search and rescue, flood relief, etc. depending on the location.

GODFREY: So Civil Air Patrol. Anything else?

WILSON: I also volunteer at my church and participate in five different youth groups.

GODFREY: Five? Just can’t decide?

WILSON: I just like all of them. I usually go to three per week. Oh, I also play sports with friends. Um... do I have a life outside of youth groups and CAP [Civil Air Patrol]? Oh, putting up with Eli.

GODFREY: Feels like a full schedule.

WILSON: I also help with running the tech booth at church.



“I was terrified of roller coasters when I was younger.”



“I've been trying to grow in compassion.”

GODFREY: Alright, is there anything else you are just desperate to tell *Potluck* readers?

WILSON: I'm very proud of my time at CEC and the connections I've made with teachers such as Mr. [Ben] Simonds and [retired science teacher] Dr. [Steve] Cassels and the opportunities I've had. And Dr. [Steve] Flink.

GODFREY: And you are a senior, we should probably establish that.

WILSON: Yeah, I'm ancient. The last three years have gone so fast. The elementary school I went to in 2nd grade opened my first year there, and it's now a decade old.

GODFREY: That's crazy. Wow. We are old. What are your plans for after high school?

WILSON: Ugh, that's hard. I plan to go into the Air Force, either MSU Denver or CU

Boulder. I would study either aeronautic engineering or aviation aeronautic sciences.

GODFREY: Any career plans with that?

WILSON: I want to fly cargo planes after doing the Air Force ROTC program and then flying for the goal of 20 years before doing a civilian job with military benefits. Oh, and raise a family. That's priority number two, priority number one is the Lord.

GODFREY: Good priorities. How would you say your faith has influenced your life?

WILSON: I was raised in Christian household, with the values of showing compassion and love to all people. I've been trying to grow, especially in senior year, in compassion and show love to our friend group but also the entire school with helping with freshmen, sophomores, and volunteering. Be a shining and smiling face with my bright yellow Crocs. That'd be a fun [article] title: "Interview with the Yellow Crocs."

GODFREY: That would be a fun title. [To Wilson's Crocs] So, yellow Crocs, any input? No? [To Wilson] I think you should get some new Crocs, they're not very talkative.

WILSON: Yeah. Oh, that's a terrifying idea.

GODFREY: What is?

WILSON: Putting one of the talking Chucky dolls on the crocs so every time I walk, it'll talk to people. "Feed me, fix me. Retire me."

GODFREY: Yeah, that is a little terrifying. Alright, back to your career. Why cargo planes specifically?

WILSON: I was terrified of roller coasters when I was younger and cargo planes get shot at less, so I have a higher chance of returning

home.

GODFREY: Fair enough.

WILSON: Flying cargo planes is also more applicable to the civilian world after retiring from Air Force. So, yeah, that and better survival chances.

GODFREY: Makes sense. Alright, this is actually the last question. Why the Air Force?

WILSON: Well, it's the best military branch in US. Also, there's the most pilot opportunities.

GODFREY: Makes sense.

WILSON: And they don't eat crayons, like Marines.

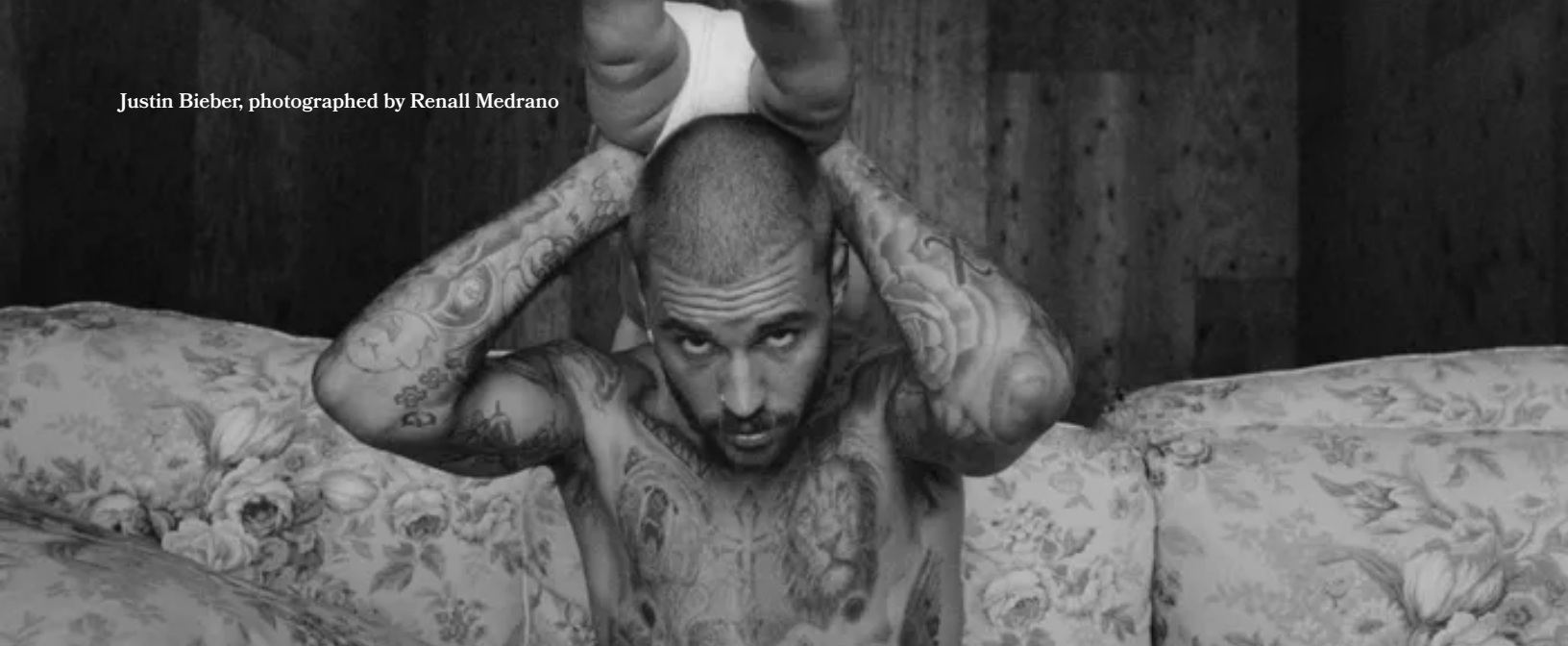
GODFREY: [Laughs] Thanks, Evan. Alright, well, I think that's everything

WILSON: Alright. Thanks for having me. I'm gonna take a nap. I've been up since 5.

GODFREY: So have I.

WILSON: I went to bed at 10:30.

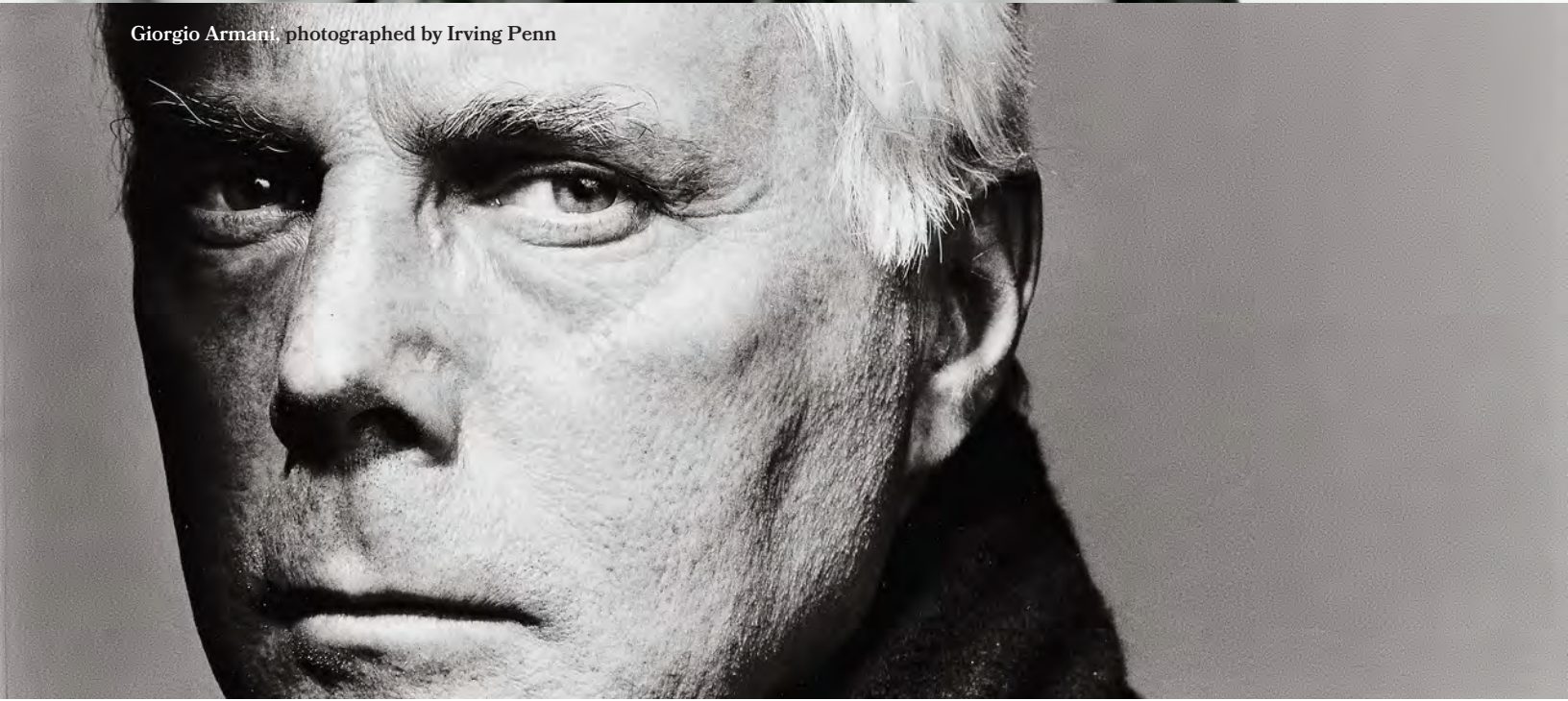
GODFREY: I did not. Alright, this is the end of the interview, 'cause I don't know how else to end it. 🍌



Justin Bieber, photographed by Renall Medrano



Fifth Harmony in the music video for "Write on Me", directed by Sam Lecca



Giorgio Armani, photographed by Irving Penn

Hot Gossip!

The latest in pop culture by Isabel Harris

Everyone’s Childhood Crush Just Dropped Another Banger Album

On Thursday, September 4, Justin Bieber announced on social media that his new album *Swag II* would be released the very next day. This surprise was less than two months after the re-lease of the initial and previous album, *Swag*.

According to *Teen Vogue*, after all the hate that his wife, Hailey Bieber, has received online, it seems Justin felt compelled to show the world that their marriage is strong and they will rise above all the criticism. Sorry to all the Jelena fans, but it looks like the Biebers are still one hap-py family!

Taking the World Back to 2016

Thanks to the Jonas Brothers, one of this generation's biggest girl groups reunited for a night. According to *Billboard*, on August 31, 5th Harmony took the stage to perform some of their hit songs. Now, consisting of four women, the Dal-las crowd was lit as fans screamed to “Worth It” and “Work from Home.”

Will the girls be back for new songs? Only

time will tell. One thing is for certain: Camila Cabello was greatly missed. Elle reported that she did show support to her former bandmates by commenting hearts on their social media posts about the reunion. It appears all members remain on good terms.

Fashion Icon Giorgio Armani Gains His Wings

On a somber note, *USA Today* reports that on Sept. 4, Giorgio Armani passed away at the age of 91 in Milan, Italy. Armani was an iconic figure in the fashion industry, known for revo-lutionizing modern style with his clean, elegant designs. From clothing, makeup products, jewelry, and interior home pieces, Armani’s name became a global brand.

According to *Buzzfeed*, he was ranked in the top 200 billionaires, with a net worth of 12.1 billion. He was born on July 11, 1934, in Piacen-za, Italy, and continued working until his passing.

Armani's legacy will live on through the fashion empire that he built, and the numerous amount of designers and artists he inspired along the way. 🙏

A Persian rug,
photo by Sina Saadatmand on Instagram

What's So Fun About *Rugs*?

Saigen Schillings
weaves the answer

Digging deep into my personality, you may find what some people think is a weird obsession with rugs. This is not the full truth because if you dig deeper, you can narrow it down to one kind of rug, short-pile rugs. But one may ask, what is my obsession with short-pile rugs? To understand my commitment to short-pile rugs, one must first understand my burning hatred of long-pile rugs. It all stems from an incident in 2018. In need of a new rug for my sister's freshly repainted bedroom, we travelled the two-hour trip from our then home in Fort Collins to the Ikea in Centennial. We purchased a new, comfortable long-pile rug. We loaded the rug into the family's 2004 Toyota 4Runner and began the trip back to Fort Collins. But then we discovered the true danger of long-pile rugs, static electricity. The long fibers of the rolled rug rubbed together, causing a spark that ignited the carpet in the back of the 4Runner. After smelling the smoke from the burning carpet, we pulled over to the side of the road and called emergency services, fearing that the gas tank could ignite. Almost in comedic timing, the fire spread to the gas tank just as a fire engine pulled up, burning the car to the ground literally seconds before the fire department began spraying it with water. Unfortunately, the family pet rock, and haul of frozen Swedish meatballs perished in the fire. Insurance initially refused to pay after sending an adjuster to analyze the remnants of the car, claiming that the rug starting the fire was negligence on our part. Eventually, they totaled out the car. Going forth from this incident, I aim as my life's mission to prevent any other individuals from befalling the same fate as our Swedish meatballs by spreading the good word of the long-pile rugs far superior alternative: the short-pile rug.

A rug or carpet's pile height is the measurement of the length of the rug's upright fibers from the backing to the tip of the fiber. Pile height can be measured by placing a

ruler in between the carpet fibers, holding an individual fiber upright, and measuring its length. Although this method is good for home measurements, higher precision instruments such as calipers can provide significantly more accurate readings. Mitutoyo is often considered the leading manufacturer of calipers, although their high purchase price may provide a high barrier to entry for home buyers. A height of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch or less is considered a low pile height, and a height of $\frac{1}{2}$ inch or more is considered a high pile height. Rugs with fibers between these measurements are considered to be a medium-pile height.

These classifications are often abbreviated to short-pile, medium-pile, and long-pile. Although these abbreviations make it require less room to represent a rug's pile height, it often leads to a misunderstanding that a rug's pile is the same measurement as a rug's pile height. A rug's pile height is instead the measurement of a rug's density and is measured by taking the face weight, the amount of yarn on the surface of a rug, ignoring its backing, and multiplying it by 36. It is important to distinguish the pile height from the pile when using numbered measurements, although no short-pile, medium-pile, and long-pile designation exists for a rug's legitimate pile measurement, and therefore it is safe to use these abbreviations.

There are two common types of rug pile categories: cut pile and loop pile. Loop pile has the fibers attached to the backing by both ends of the yarn forming a loop whereas cut pile has them attached by only one end of the yarn. Cut pile is often made by taking a loop pile rug and shearing off the top, splitting the yarn in half, hence the name cut pile. Cut pile is considered to feel softer on one's feet, whereas loop pile has a reputation for being more durable.

Short-pile rugs have the shortest fibers and, therefore, are less likely to catch on abrasive materials. Even though most rugs do not experience harsh enough abrasives for an immediately noticeable difference in durability, rugs do commonly experience abrasion through furniture, pets, shoes, and even feet. Therefore, picking a short-pile rug will significantly prolong the lifespan of the rug as compared to rugs with a longer pile length. Rugs also frequently trap allergens in between the fibers of the rug. These allergens can get released into the air, causing breathing problems and stirring up allergies in individuals. Rugs with a shorter pile height are less likely to trap these allergens, along with the shorter pile letting a vacuum remove more allergens, creating less accumulation. Short-pile rugs are also easier to clean spills off of than long-pile rugs, leading to other sanitary and longevity benefits. All these benefits are why short-pile rugs are the only kind of rug seen in high-wear areas.

This leads to the conclusion that short-pile rugs are the optimal choice for all your needs. But if short-pile rugs are the optimal choice, why do other options of rugs exist? Many argue that long-pile rugs are more comfortable on the feet than short-pile rugs. Although this is subjective to the individual, short-pile rugs are often misrepresented and can offer a similar amount of comfort as a long-pile rug. Short-pile rugs available in big box stores are often solely designed for commercial and high-wear applications. These rugs are built for heavy-duty applications and trade premium feeling fibers for strength. Although it is hard to find, a quality short-pile rug designed for home use uses more comfortable fibers. This makes it feel better on the feet and can therefore lead to a short-pile rug matching, if not exceeding, the comfort of longer-pile rugs, with Persian-style rugs being a personal favorite. Some individuals believe that medium-pile rugs are a good in-between.

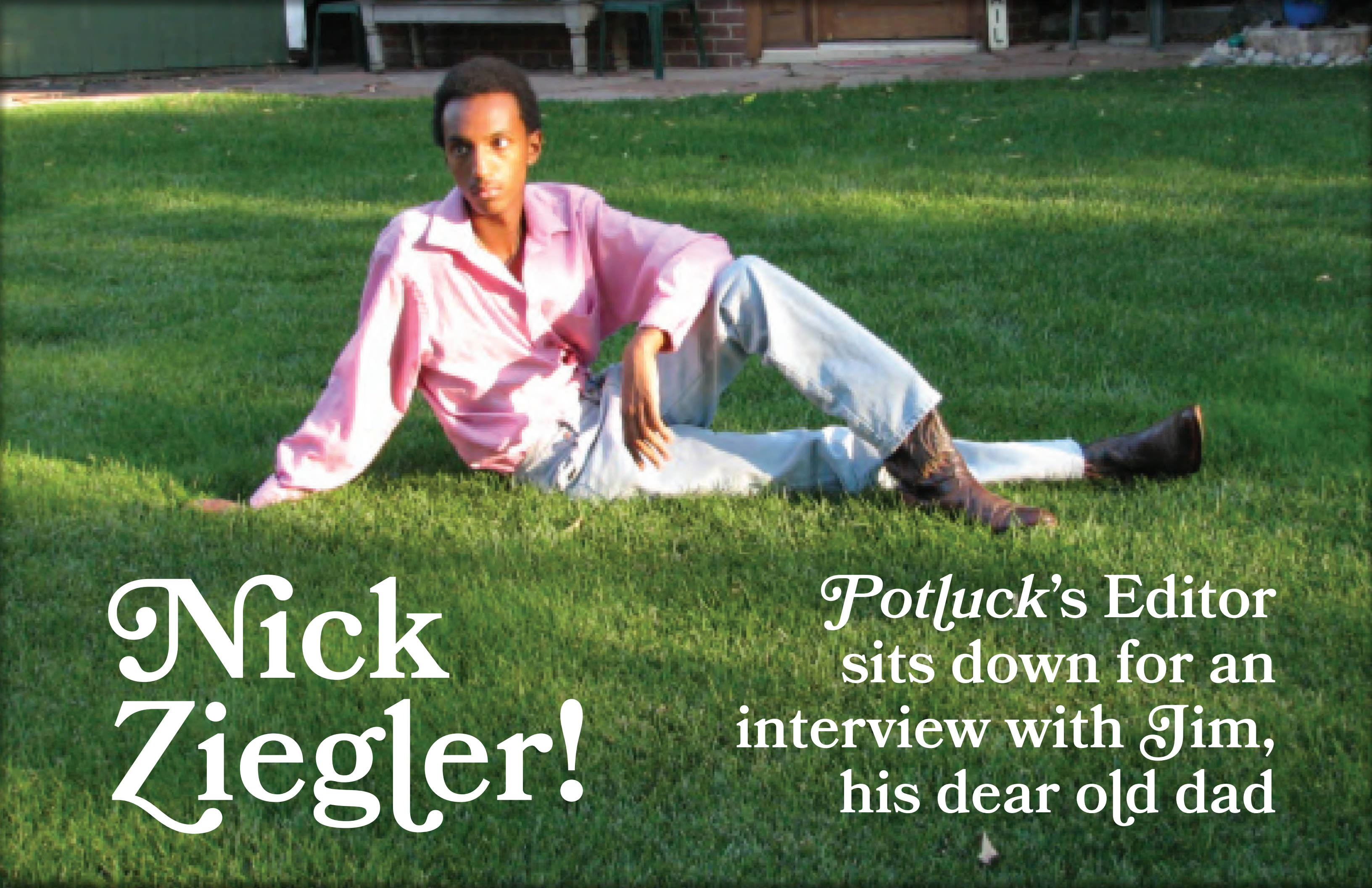
Mid-pile rugs try to accomplish what a short-pile rug already accomplishes, but make concessions to match the popular style.

By finding a good quality short-pile rug, one can match the comfort of a medium-pile rug. Wool is one of the most recommended fibers for comfort in carpets. Polytrimethylene Terephthalate, often abbreviated to PTT, is a highly recommended alternative with excellent comfort and durability. It is sold under the brand name Triexta by DuPont. Denier is the measurement of the thickness of a rug's fibers. A lower denier means thinner fibers and, therefore, leads to a more comfortable feel. As previously mentioned, cut pile construction also leads to a more comfortable rug.

Short-pile rugs are the optimal choice for most practical uses, but are often misrepresented by big-box stores. By picking a short-pile rug in the right material, one gets to reap the benefits of a short-pile rug. ☕

“One must understand my burning hatred of long-pile rugs.”

- Saigen Schillings



Nick
Ziegler!

Potluck's Editor
sits down for an
interview with Jim,
his dear old dad



“I’m named after
Santa Claus.”



Interview and photography by DR. JAMES ZIEGLER. Special thanks to AUNT BEV and KIRK HUNTER.

NICHOLAS ZIEGLER: Okay, the recording has started.

DR. JAMES ZIEGLER: Alright, hello! My name is Dr. James Garfield Ziegler, also known as Dr. Z to my students, Doc Zig or JimmyZig, PhD, is my pen name, and Dad or Father to you.

NICHOLAS: [Laughs]

JAMES: It’s nice to see you this morning.

NICHOLAS: It’s nice to see you too; I did not know you were going to do that intro.

JAMES: Thank you for agreeing to the interview. Are you ready to begin?

NICHOLAS: Yes, I am.

JAMES: Alright. Okay, for the record, could you please state your full name?

NICHOLAS: My full name is Nicholas Kirubel Ziegler.

JAMES: Do you prefer to be called Nick, Nicholas, or something else?

NICHOLAS: Nick. I’m fine with Nicholas. Some people spell it “Nic”, like nicotine, and that always kind of annoys me, but it’s whatever.

JAMES: Yeah, I can see that. That would annoy me, too. [To Odin, the family dog] Stop it. Odin, no. Okay. Kirubel is an interesting middle name; could you tell us something about this middle name?

NICHOLAS: So, when I was first born, I was

born in Ethiopia, I, as far as we know, did not have a name or if I did, we don’t know it anymore. It’s gone, I guess.

JAMES: Well, I can tell you, your name was Kirubel James Ziegler. From your birth mother right away, no.

NICHOLAS: Yes, that’s what I mean.

JAMES: Okay.

NICHOLAS: My birth mother put me into the adoption agencies, the orphanage, et cetera when I was about a month old because she couldn’t afford to take care of me and hold a job at the same time. And they [workers at the orphanage] gave me the name Kirubel, which is the name of an angel, I believe, in the Book of Enoch. It’s one of the “apocryphal” books of the Bible. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church still practices it. And it means “as God says.”

JAMES: Okay. And, just so you know, your name was Kirubel James Ziegler.

NICHOLAS: Yeah, because Ethiopian naming conventions is your given name and then your surname is just your father’s first name. My father—as, reader, you can see here, is James—so that would have been my name, but then they just decided to westernize it, and that’s why I’m named Nick. I’m named after Santa Claus.

JAMES: Okay. At what age were you adopted?

NICHOLAS: Seven months old.

JAMES: Okay. You were actually still six months, but that’s close enough.

NICHOLAS: [Laughs] Okay, semantics.

JAMES: What is your earliest memory in the United States?

NICHOLAS: My first memory is, I was about four years old. We were all driving up, my family and I were driving up to see my grandfather and my uncle up in Wisconsin. We were out in Nebraska and I just see this big city, all in front of me from the car window. Everything’s really gray. I have my Burger King French toast sticks that they have there. And for some reason, that’s just been imprinted into my memory. It’s my first one.

JAMES: I remember that.

NICHOLAS: Yeah, it was a good time.

JAMES: Yeah, okay. How do you feel about living in a blended family? I mean, you’re African-American, your mother is Hispanic and Caucasian, and your father’s Caucasian.

NICHOLAS: I mean, I think it’s nice. I don’t know how to explain it. It’s kind of bothersome that I don’t have much of a relationship to, you know, larger Black culture or Ethiopian culture. That’s been kind of frustrating for me, especially since we do live in a very white part of the city and the state. But I do love my parents, of course. They’re lame, but I guess everyone’s parents are, so.

JAMES: Wow. Just wow.

NICHOLAS: [Laughs]

JAMES: Is this something that you think about, or is it just your normal, so you don’t really think about it much?

NICHOLAS: Both? I mean, I can’t really imagine being raised by anyone else, but I do think about it a lot, yeah.

JAMES: What is, are your favorite things to do in your downtime?

NICHOLAS: “What *is, are* my favorite

things?” [Laughs]

JAMES: Well, you know, if you were going to list one thing, it’d be “is”, if you’re going to say multiple things “are.”

NICHOLAS: I like to read. Because I do this, you know, the magazine, I’ve been reading a lot of self-help books that you, my interviewer and—

JAMES: [Coughs]

NICHOLAS: –are you choking again? [Laughs]

JAMES: Go ahead. Good thing we’re not on video. You have to put that in the write-up. [Laughs]

NICHOLAS: Because I do the magazine, I’ve been reading a lot of self-help books that you, my dad, had been giving me lately, and then right now I’ve been reading *Another Country*, the novel by James Baldwin. Other than that, I like to sing. I sing a lot.

JAMES: Okay.

NICHOLAS: I need to find some kind of athletic thing to do so that I’m a more well-rounded person, but it’s just hard to find that time.

DR. CINDY ZIEGLER: You like to walk and run, and you’ve got friends.

JAMES: This is his interview.

NICHOLAS: Hi, Mom!

JAMES: What’s your favorite thing to do with your friends back here in Colorado?

NICHOLAS: I love to grab dinner with people. You can tell, based off the fact that this is a magazine called *Potluck*, I love having

Decor

shared food with people. I love talking to people.

JAMES: Okay. Your puppy won't be quiet during this interview. What are your thoughts on that?

NICHOLAS: I think that he has a comment that he wants to say. Maybe he has a question for us.

JAMES: [*Laughs*] Do you have a comment, Odin?

ODIN THE DOG: [*Whines "I love you"*]

JAMES: Okay.

CINDY: That was "I love you."

JAMES: All right, so changing subjects again, what are your thoughts about CEC?

NICHOLAS: [*Laughing*] What are my thoughts about... [*Businessman voice*] I love CEC. I think every prospective parent should go there, [*Laughing*] I think that we should give all of our money to the school, and we should give all of our money to me, specifically.

JAMES: What do you *honestly* think?

CINDY: Yeah, because this is marketing.

NICHOLAS: I think CEC is a very great school. It's small, but I do like it. I have a lot of good friends there. I appreciate the opportunities that it's given me. I love having a very kind of tight-knit community that CEC presents. And there's so many talented people there, man, and I think that it's really wonderful. I never call you "man". Why am I talking like that?

JAMES: Why did you want to start *Potluck*,

your school's student publication or magazine?

NICHOLAS: I wanted to do something to help out my community. I did Student Council, like my first two years at CEC.

JAMES: No, I think it was two semesters.

NICHOLAS: No, two years. Freshman year and sophomore year. And eventually I got a little bit tired of doing that, or a little bit exhausted by it, frankly. And I wanted to find something else. I've told this story before in the magazine, but I went to like one of my co-workers' graduation party, and I looked at her yearbook and it had all these different articles about just the most random things. And it was like, "These are the highlights from our student newspaper," the Heritage [High School] *Pioneer*. And I thought, *Oh, let's do a magazine*. And then one thing led to another, and now we're here.

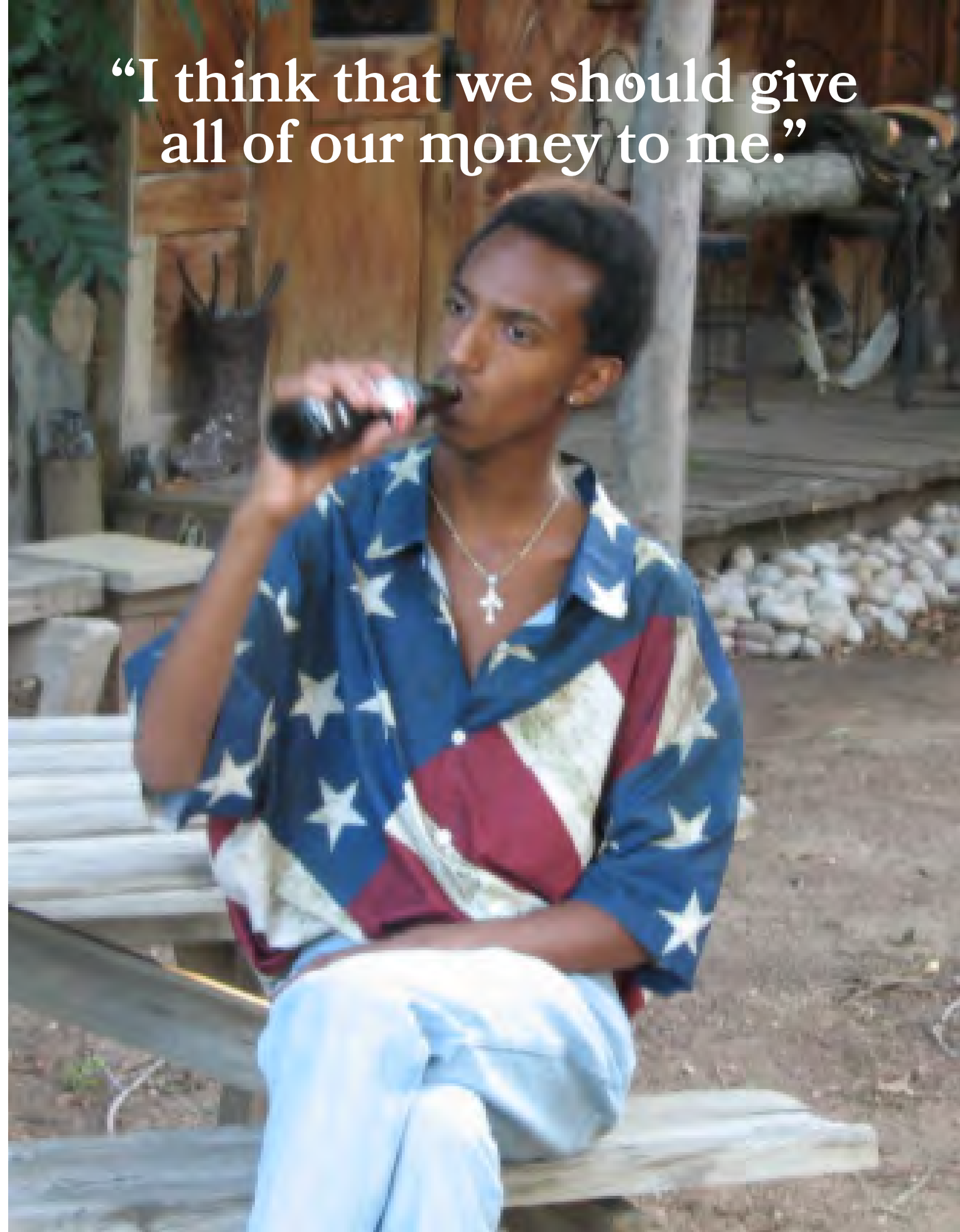
JAMES: All right, what are your thoughts knowing that this will be your last year at CEC and running *Potluck*? What are your thoughts about the future of *Potluck*?

NICHOLAS: I'm terrified. That sounds bad. I'm looking forward to seeing what I can do with *Potluck*. I think there's something really interesting to the idea that this is our last chance, or my last chance, and I think that I am very excited to train a new person and hopefully build up like an editorial staff and find the next person to replace me. It's all terrifying and it's going to be a very rough road, but I think that it'll be a good one.

JAMES: Okay, so where do you want to live after you graduate from college?

NICHOLAS: The city. I don't know which one, just the city.

“I think that we should give all of our money to me.”



JAMES: Where would you like to travel when you are older?

NICHOLAS: I plan to live in Ethiopia for like six months to a year when I’m older. You made a face. [Laughs]

JAMES: Do you see yourself having kids when you’re older?

NICHOLAS: Mm-hmm! Like, one or two.

JAMES: Okay, why? And if so, how many children do you think you’d like to have someday?

NICHOLAS: I mean, it’s kind of the thing that everybody does, but also I do think that there’s something wonderful about the idea of like raising somebody and you know, teaching them the iWmportant lessons of life and helping them through that.

JAMES: How many?

NICHOLAS: Like I said, two.

CINDY: [Laughs] How many?! Commit! We have a document for you to sign!

JAMES: Where do you see yourself, or what do you see yourself doing in 10 years?

NICHOLAS: Uhh, I have no clue.

JAMES: Okay. What do you see yourself doing when you are your parents’ age?

NICHOLAS: I don’t know what I’m gonna do when I’m that old, you know?

JAMES: [Laughs] Okay.

CINDY: That’s fair.

JAMES: Okay. And do you have anything else you’d like to share?

NICHOLAS: Can we talk about the magazine? [Laughs]

JAMES: I did! I asked about *Potluck* up there earlier.

CINDY: What other questions would you like on there?

JAMES: Yeah, so what would you like to say about *Potluck*?

NICHOLAS: I mean, I’m putting a lot of work into it. I’ll note, this is our first article that we are doing for the magazine, and I—we have to finish this after 3 weeks, which is terrifying. And we’ve done it before; we’ll do it again. I don’t know how we do it, but somehow we do. And I’m just hoping to do the best that I can and to make something that represents the students. That is my goal.

JAMES: You seem to have a larger staff this year. Do you think that’ll help make things easier?

NICHOLAS: Hopefully! I mean, it’s like about ten to eleven people, so, like, one good Thanksgiving dinner-size staff. And they’re all very wonderful people.

JAMES: Well, one good *potluck*!

NICHOLAS: He made another face. [Laughs] We haven’t like really done much yet in terms of work because the school year just started, but we’ve been sending each other photos of our dogs. We’ll probably do an article on [the film] *K-Pop Demon Hunters*, because that’s what everybody’s talking about right now. I’m very happy to be working with them; they’re all very talented people and I’m really curious to see how they’ll all manage to become friends and to make something that is bigger than themselves and, like I said, represents the students.

NICHOLAS: I hope that we are doing the best that we can to make the world a more fun and weirder place.

JAMES: Okay. And Dr. Ono’s been a strong supporter of you in this whole venture.

NICHOLAS: She’s great; we have a lot of little impromptu discussions about what we want to do with the publication. Having that dialogue is really helpful for me.

JAMES: So you’re very thankful to have her.

NICHOLAS: Absolutely. [Editor’s Note: We miss you Dr. Ono! Love you forever!! <3]

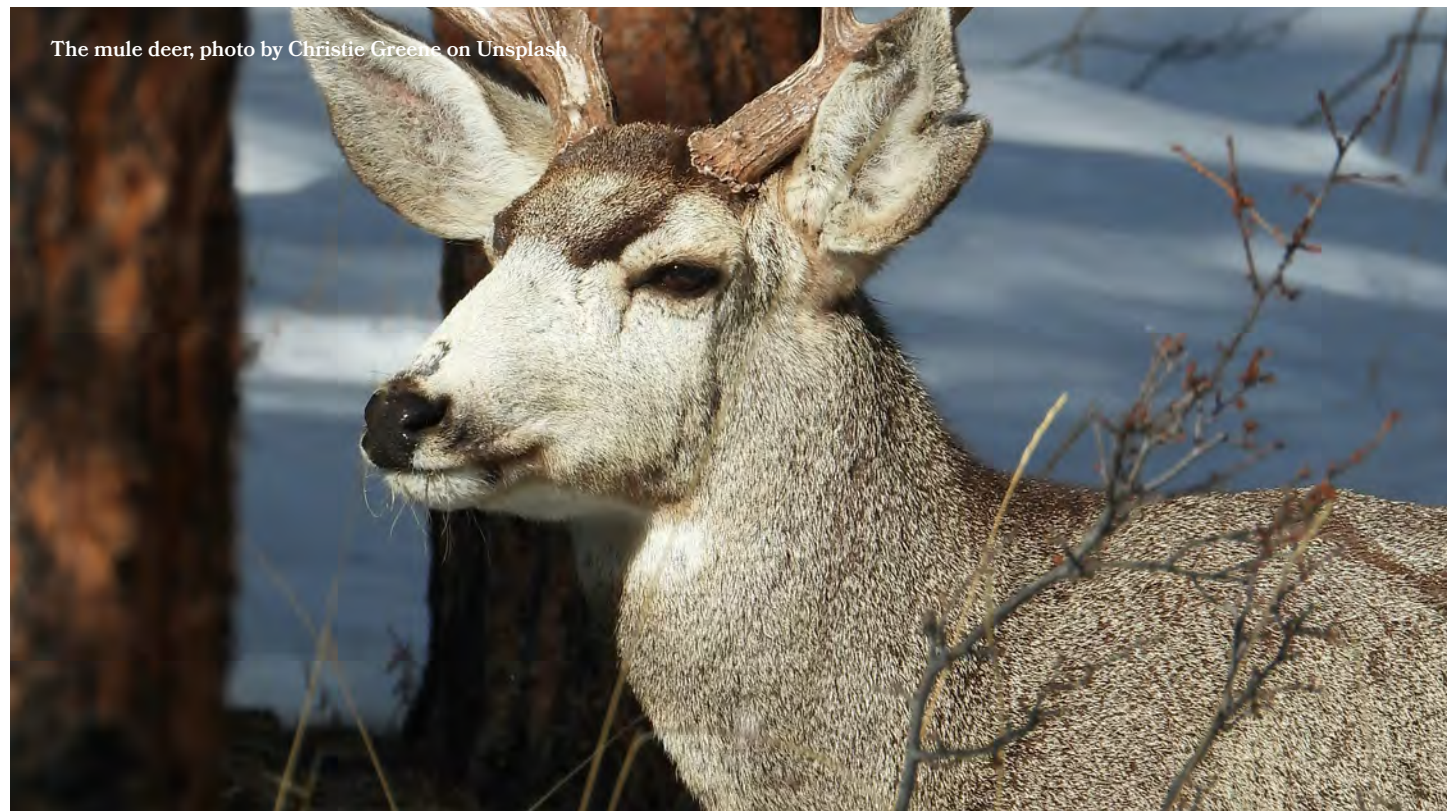
JAMES: Alright, anything else?

NICHOLAS: No. Love you, Dad.

JAMES: Love you too, kid. 🍷



Oh Deer!



The mule deer, photo by Christie Greene on Unsplash

Rachel Ragain's guide to everyone's favorite Cervid

Author's Note: When I spoke to Nick about writing this, I'm sure he thought I would write a few paragraphs. Something short and sweet. But none of the newspaper people could have ever guessed how much I was going to write. I have liked deer for years; even back when I was a young kid, I was always drawn to these creatures.

Is this an obsession? Maybe. Should I go touch some grass and get off of deer websites? Absolutely. But I think deer are fascinating, underappreciated creatures, and I'm hoping you'll agree by the end of this article. Remember, I am not an expert. Just a 17-year-old with a dream and a hyperfixation.

Deer, one of the many species beneath the umbrella of the family Cervidae, are often forgotten by most. Most people gravitate towards other ungulates, such as horses or cows, but deer are amazing creatures, with fascinating behaviors and many different forms to take.

Firstly, how on earth do you recognize a deer? How can you tell it's not just a weird horse? Firstly, horses are big, burly, and made for strength as well as speed. Those guys could stomp a person to death easily. Deer are smaller and graceful. Even larger cervids like elk wouldn't be able to carry a human, despite being similar sizes. Moose, however, would make a wonderful horse, if you can get close enough, that is. (Note: Please do not attempt to approach, touch, or—God forbid—ride a moose. Same as many other species of prey animal, moose are big, strong, and very, very nervous. They can and will see you as a threat.)

Deer, the main thing I will be talking about, are smaller, thinner and more graceful, they have narrow faces and big brown noses, which are shiny and wet like a dog. They have large eyes, relative to head size, even larger

ears, and, obviously, have antlers.

Antlers, as they are known, are extensions of an animal's skull, made up of bone and cartilage, rather than keratin. These antlers grow in the spring and shed in the fall, leaving the animal without antlers for the winter. The only species of cervid who keeps their antlers during winter are female Caribou, also one of the only cervids that have antlers regardless of sex, likely due to food scarcity and rivalry in the North.

Antlers are primarily used during the mating season, helping to improve the chances of impressing females and heightening the likeliness of being chosen as a mate. They can also be used for fighting and defense, as male cervids are known to fight often, whether over food or females.

Deer are unique, because they are widespread. There is at least one species of cervid in every country across the world, excluding Antarctica. Many notables include Whitetail and mule deer in North America, Caribou (aka reindeer) in Russia, Canada, North America and Scandinavia, fallow and red deer in many countries in Europe, and even some unique species such as muntjac, water, and chital deer in Asia.

I am going to talk about our good old American deer, in honor of freedom or whatever.

Here in Colorado, our native deer species are known as “mule deer” (*Odocoileus hemionus*).

Named for their large ears, which are much wider than those of any other cervid, compared to head size. Mule deer are also known to be larger, broader, and stronger than other North American species, perfectly adapted to the rougher, more open environ-

ments of the western states. These guys are the ones you wanna avoid hitting with your car; these fellas can mess you, and your car up.

Mule deer are found in everything from rocky, mountainous regions to bushy Prairies and thin, dry forests. They are perfectly adapted to living in places like this, with less food, colder winters and hotter summers.

What people usually think of when they hear deer, however, are the beloved whitetail deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). Whitetail deer are the world’s most widely distributed species of mammal, found in almost every state of North America, as well as some places in South America and Canada. These little guys are everywhere! Texas, specifically, has the highest concentration of whitetail deer, with an estimation of 5.3 individuals, all in herds or on farms. These guys are adaptable and good at surviving.



Whitetails are little guys, very small, thin, and made for movement rather than strength, but their size can get gradually larger as they get farther from the equator. The average whitetail is usually around 68 to 136 inches at the shoulder, although bucks can be larger.

Now, big shocker, but whitetails are primarily named after their tails, which boast a bright... guess what color... white underside, as well as a white marking just below their chin, looking like a beard, or a bib of some kind.

So very often, I see mule deer and whitetail deer mixed up, due to their similar locations and appearances. I get it, of course, not everyone is so obsessed with deer that they can recognize the species from a glance, but there are a few distinct ways to tell the two apart.



Firstly, look at the antlers. Mule deer have antlers that fork off, with many little sub-sections, whereas whitetails have antlers with one long prong, with shorter prongs sticking out of the top, located parallel to one another, no forking whatsoever.

The two are also very different in size, with mule deer reaching sizes much greater sizes than whitetails. Whitetails, however, do follow Bergmann’s rule, which means that the farther an animal is from the equator, the larger it will be.

Of course, the easiest way to differentiate is the tails. As their name suggests, whitetail deer have tails with bright white undersides, whereas mule deer have plain black or dark brown tails. Once you recognize these small details, you can easily tell the two apart.

Deer are herd animals, as you all know. They live in harems, essentially, with one male getting all the ladies. Exactly what keeps

some people up at night.

This male protects his ladies, keeps them safe, fed, and happy, and in return, he gets to pass on his genes. Some deer live slightly more solitary, but chances are, if you see one deer, there's a whole lot more lurking. Deer are crepuscular, active at dawn and dusk, bedding down during the night and resting in thicker forests during daytime. This is the best option for safety against predators.

Now, as much as I would love to write more, but I was sadly given a word limit of 1000, so I'm gonna have to stop here. I hope you enjoyed reading, and for the love of all that's holy, please think of this whenever you see a mule deer and wanna call it a whitetail. You know the difference now.

Thank you very much for sitting through my lovely little rant, and I hope that you read the rest of the magazine, even if it is tragically deer-free. 🍷

A Lot of People Think Marines Are That Way

Potluck asked twenty-one students (and Dr. Ian Rollins) what they would want to ask our new Head of School. Mr. Frutoso Chavez, was all ears





Interview and photography by NICHOLAS ZIEGLER. Special thanks to MS. DIANA HUNT, JIREH and JONNY JORDANO, ADAM and EMILEE STARK, and EVAN WILSON. The accompanying photos are dedicated to MR. PETE SHANNON.

Ellie Lease

Who are you?

[Laughs] So, we [Ziegler, the interviewer, and Chavez] talked a little bit about high school, right? Not a big athlete, I was big into music, so band was a big part of my upbringing. Started playing saxophone in elementary school, played through middle school, played in high school. In my senior year, I had four or five band classes. I marched, I played in symphonic band, I played in the orchestra, and then I played in the jazz band as well, so band was very important to me. During that time, too, I joined the Aurora Police Explorers; it's sanctioned through the Boy Scouts, but what it was is you went and you did things with the police department. One of the things we would regularly do is go on drivealongs with the police officers. We had our own uniforms, carried a radio, assisted with a lot of stuff. I actually helped do some liquor stings around town. There's a news article they did on me—recorded, so I've got the old video, my mom still has it somewhere—where I went in and would buy liquor, and if they sold it to me underage, we'd issue them citations, and then I would, since I was the one doing it, I would put that stuff actually into evidence, so I'd tag it, mark it, so a lot of that kind of stuff, which was really neat.

I bring that up because there's one of the police officers there that I became very close with, and he was a Marine. I was looking for options after high school, I didn't really know what I wanted to do, and he pointed me towards the Marine Corps. That's how I ended up going in the Marines, was because

of this gentleman. My end goal was to join the FBI, so I wanted to go into an intelligence field. I went in as a signals intelligence guy, had a signals intelligence team that I led. A lot of it was cryptology [sic], so decrypting ciphered code. A lot of it was signals collection; we did electronic warfare, which is like jamming and direction finding, that kind of thing; top secret, SCI [Sensitive Compartment Information] clearance for that. I did that for about four years.

But I couldn't go to school, and at the end of the day I wanted to go to college to get my degree, because I wanted to go in the FBI. I ended up taking a job as a marksmanship instructor; I taught marksmanship to about 5,000 Marines at Edson Range in California, and in the evenings, I went to class, so I started going to night school. I ended up getting married and having a kiddo in the Marines; my son was born in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. That's my oldest son, Frutoso; we call him TJ, Frutoso Junior. Then we went to San Diego, ended up getting divorced right before I got out, and brought TJ back to Colorado with me—my ex-wife stayed in California, she was actually my high school sweetheart—raised him with me, and started a real estate appraisal company once I finished school.

I ended up remarrying, and my wife, at that time, was in education, and the market kind of died in real estate, so she convinced me to go into education. I started teaching elementary, I taught fifth grade, and my wife, Emily, and I both taught fifth grade at the same time, so we used the same curriculum, we used to plan together, we used to have our kids pen pal each other; it was a lot of fun. Then I went and got my master's degree in special education. Shortly after that, I got selected to be part of the Ritchie program at DU—that's a leadership program that they have to get your principal's license, which also included an internship as a principal. After

that, I went and opened up High Tech Early College [the high school now known as Northeast Early College]. I worked out at Montbello for about 10 years, and then went over to Aurora to East Middle School. I worked there for about 10 years, during which time I had two kiddos with my wife Emily; we had Chase and we had Gage. Then, I took the job over here.

Hanaan Amatul Afuw, Dyanna Burton, Lily Chleborad, Avelina Pshichenko, Noah Rittenhouse, Lennon Santana and Piper Shelton

What made you choose to be principal of this school?

I liked that early college model when I worked in Montbello at High Tech; the way we found success with our kiddos was really building a program around the kiddo, around the student, and that's what you guys do here. So I thought, *That's where I want to go*. I'd been in middle school for about 10 years—that's a hard place to work, middle schoolers are hard, so I was looking to get back into high school, and really looking for an early-college model. This job popped up, and I figured I'd give it a shot. After you're somewhere for about 10 years, you look for something new.

Ian Lovett

Where did your name come from?

It's my dad's name; I'm actually the fourth, my son is the fifth. It's an old name, it's from the Iberian Peninsula, that's Spain and Portugal. My family actually came to this continent—I'll say that because it wasn't a country yet—in the late 1500s. You can track my family history back to the conquistadors. There's a gentleman called Ornate [Juan de Oñate, the Spanish conquistador known for the Acoma massacre], he's known as the last Conquistador, they [Oñate and his men] settled Santa Fe, New Mexico, so that's when my family

came over; they settled Santa Fe in the early 1600s. The Spanish brought the horses, my people brought the horses; when you hear the stories about the cowboys and conquering the West by wrangling wild horses, those were wild horses that we brought, they weren't wild to this continent. This area, specifically, Santa Fe, that was part of *Nueva España*, that's new Spain, for about 200 years. When you go down to that area, it was part of Spain much longer than it's been part of the United States, right? So my family's been here for a very, very long time.

But to answer the original question, Frutoso is a Portuguese name, and from what I understand, it comes from a city called Flores, which means like fountains, in Spain or Portugal, somewhere in that area. It means “fruitful”; the area where it comes from was, you know, [full of] orchards.

Sophia Reisdorph

What did you want to be when you were little?

An FBI agent. That's why I did the whole Marine Corps thing, but then when I came out here, I was a single father. It wasn't really realistic. I had to make sure I was taking a career that was good for being a father, right? But an FBI agent is what I really wanted to do.

Nora Kelly

What year did you graduate high school?

1993.

Aiden Worsham

What did you serve as in the military?

Like I said, it was signals intelligence first. So MOSs have numbers. So it was a 2621, that was signals intelligence, and then an 8531, which is the marksmanship instructor. I taught about 5,000 Marines how to

Coronation

shoot.

Nicholas Ziegler

You served as a Marine between 1993 and 1999; how specifically did this affect your worldview and leadership style?

Gosh, worldview? Because of it, I love to travel, that's a big thing I picked up from the military. My wife and I travel a lot. We travel a lot with our kids. When you talk about a worldview, I think it's very important to get out and see what the rest of the world is doing. I've been to every continent except for Antarctica. I've been lucky enough to take my kids to South America, to Europe, to Asia. My wife and I have been to Africa. I've been to the Middle East, Dubai, Greece, Italy. We were in Italy when the Pope passed and so got to see the Pope lying in state. I've been able to see a lot of things. I've been around Tokyo, been to Thailand. I like to get out and around.

And then leadership style?

There's a Marine Corps general called General [Mark] Milley [the *Army* general and former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff]. I get a lot of my leadership style from him. He's a brilliant man, but leans heavily on his people, right? When he talks about leadership, he says, "When you take over a new command, first you come in and you listen, and you learn, and then you help. And then once you get those three things down, then you help. And then you have a chance to lead." So I'm still kind of in that listening and learning stage and helping a little bit around here. Once I have an understanding of what's really going on, that's when I get a chance to step up and lead. So it's about not disrupting the system, it's about honoring the work that's being done. It's about leveraging the leadership and the knowledge around you.

There's a lot of people with much more

advanced degrees than I in this building; we have several doctors, we have lots of intelligent, talented people. I'd be a silly guy to come in here and start bossing those folks around. I'm not a guy that comes in here and just starts barking orders. A lot of people think that Marines are that way, where you come in and you're barking, but the truth is Marines are really about leadership from a mentorship kind of model. The primary purpose of Marine Corps leadership is mission accomplishment. But the secondary purpose is troop morale, which means you take care of your people. You make sure your people are happy and taken care of. And they have the tools they need to do their jobs.

Evan Wilson

What is the biggest leadership lesson you learned through working in schools?

That's a great question. This one impacts my work every day still, especially working in middle schools. When you're working in middle school, age-appropriate behavior—I'll put it in a different way—developmentally-appropriate behaviors for middle school-aged kids means that they are pushing boundaries, they are testing limits, they are questioning authority. Those are age-appropriate behaviors for middle school kids. And oftentimes, you'll have adults that want to put their foot down and fight a kid, argue with a kid, and go down to that kind of level. And it's just not appropriate; the kid's behaving the way the kid should behave. I need the adults to behave in the way the adults are expected to behave, and that age-appropriate behavior for an adult looks much different than what it looks like for a student. As adults, I expect you to mentor and to model the expected behaviors to the students. I don't like when I see people become authoritarians towards students and bark and be kind of rude or disrespectful. Even when the kiddo is wrong. Because we expect the kiddo to be wrong! It's our job

“Parking is never free.”



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to teach and train and mentor and to coach them into how to be kind adults.

Every couple years, they pull up a piece of pottery from Egypt or somewhere. This is 2500-year-old pottery, where they scribe in the pottery with hieroglyphs. And they decipher it. And it's kids writing lines because they were misbehaving in school. This is nothing new with kids misbehaving; it's been going on since the beginning of time. It's how the adults respond that's important.

Max Brodje

What's your favorite category of art (theater, painting, music, et cetera)?

Great question. Me, personally, to do? I enjoy all of it. I love music; I go to a lot of concerts. But I paint at home too; [Chavez motions to a painting inside his office] that's actually one of mine right there, that's one of my pieces of work. My grandmother's an artist, my mom's an artist, my middle kiddo used to sing for the Colorado Children's Chorale. When we go to new cities, usually we try to catch a sporting event and something with the arts, either some music or a theatrical production. When I talk about my travels, we're looking to indulge in that a little bit when we travel abroad.

Do you have a favorite piece of art? Across any medium?

That's kind of a deep question, right? [Laughs] There's a gentleman, Salvador Dalí, are you familiar with him? He's a Spanish artist. If you go to the Costa Brava region of Spain, that's the northern region, he has a museum up there [the Dalí Theater and Museum in Catalonia, Spain] that he built, I think, in the 60s [1974]. He's actually kept in a crypt there. It's almost like Meow Wolf; it's very quirky, very bizarre. There's staircases that lead to nowhere, the art only makes

sense from certain perspectives, right? You walk in a room and it just looks weird, when you stand in a certain corner, Oh my gosh, it's a face. I really appreciate that just because it's so creative, so outside of the box. I really appreciate that. But I love a lot of the classical stuff, too.

Dr. Ian Rollins

What role do the arts have here at CEC? Do you see this as STEM school or as a STEAM school?

It's definitely a STEAM school. I see the eclectic nature in our students as well as our staff, and I really enjoy that. I think about the...is it the drone room with Chris? I can't remember his last name [Schaumberg], I'm still learning. He has a vinyl record player in that room. A lot of people play music in the class, in the background, but he's spinning vinyl in there. I appreciate that. The ensemble here, inviting the kids in to learn an instrument and just be part of it. To me, that's the inspiration behind all the other work. That's what gets you, gets my blood pumping anyway. It gives me joy. I've seen it in the students, right? The drama club here is almost like the heartbeat of the school, in some ways. It's a STEAM school for sure.

Santiago Rubalcava

Will there be any big changes affecting students?

Like I said, I like to lean into the knowledge around me. So that extends beyond just the staff, that includes the students. When we have leaders in this building that want to come and bring me ideas or things that we can do to make this school better, I can't promise that we'll do that, but I can promise that I'll listen, I'll look into it, and I'll research to see if it's something that we can do. The eSports kids wanted to expand the number of games that they were able to join; I was able

to give them the green light to open up and do some new things. I'm all ears, right?

Tyler Smith

Can parking be free/reduced?

[Laughs] Parking is never free; it's, at what expense is it being paid for? Did you see that the parking lot looks different this year than it did last year? It's been resurfaced. The whole blacktop was all laid new over the summer, and all the lines were restriped. That's not free. That costs. So for this year, that money came out of our educational funds because nobody's gifting us that. So that means that it took away from potentially a lot of the arts money, a lot of our instructional money had to go to resurface this blacktop. And that has to be done about every three years. Otherwise, that water seeps into the blacktop, and then when it freezes, it expands, which causes that asphalt to break up and degrade over time.

So, at what expense do we want to pay for those things? Either we charge fees or we take it out of our educational budget. And when we looked around at the schools around us, almost everybody's charging a parking fee, and we picked fees that were in line with what the neighboring districts are doing, so that it's fair and equitable. It's not about trying to charge fees and be gross and nasty; it's about trying to make sure we have enough money to do the things in the building that we want to be able to do and to continue being able to provide you guys with the experience that you want here.

Would parking fees ever be reduced at some point?

So, we've had many conversations around this with the network. So this is not a DC North[-specific] issue; all of CEC decided to do that this year. What the leaders in all the different buildings did was we gave our

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concerns back to the network leadership, and network leadership is listening to it. That's why we're not charging fees right now. They're looking at how to make it more fair, more equitable, and I think a lighter lift on families. One of the things that came up is, what if it's a family that has three kids that come here? Does it make sense to charge them three times? Or it's a family that the kid maybe drives two or three different cars here; should we charge each and every vehicle? One of the things we push back on is, maybe it's just one fee per family to make that fair. I don't think it's right to charge one family three times as much because they're changing vehicles or whatnot. Those are the things that the network is looking at and considering, and we're waiting to hear back from them so we can move forward with a plan that's the same at each campus.

So there is a possibility, then? Or, for now, it will still remain \$100 for the foreseeable future?

Like I said, they're looking at those concerns that we had, and I'm waiting to hear back. I imagine it's going to change slightly from the initial communication; it's going to look a little different, but we've got to charge. Otherwise, I'm going to keep taking money away from our programs here. But what it looks like, I don't know yet; it's going to look a little bit different than what we first said.

Kirk Locey

What is the likelihood of seniors being able to paint parking spaces? What do we need to do to make that happen?

So, if we paint parking spaces, anything that we do out there that impacts the surface has got to be maintained, and that all costs money. You know what I mean? I hadn't heard anybody talking about painting spots. I can't imagine that that would be something that we

*“You can trace my
family history
back to the
conquistadors.”*



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could do, just because of the costs that would be incurred from that. We'd have to charge even more money then to make sure that we're keeping the parking lot safe and drivable. But I imagine we could do something fun like chalk in it, if we want to do a chalk day. I think we could come up with something else, certainly.

Maryam Tahir

How do we improve...this?

Give me [something] more specific.

The question literally just says, "How do we improve... this?"

[Laughs] Well, it goes back to my initial piece about listening to the leadership around me, right? And that, again, includes the student leaders. I'm constantly listening to staff, constantly listening to students, and looking at options that we have to make things better.

We had some parents that came in here, and they wanted to do some really fun stuff for seniors; we're still looking at a venue for, like, prom, right? So we're looking at what that could look like and what that could be. We used to have a student that went here; they provided the lights for homecoming. For the dance itself, those lights are expensive; it's probably five, ten thousand dollars. The scaffolding is very expensive. Our play production, we don't have lighting for that either, right? So I'm thinking, *What if we bought lights that could be used for the play production and be used for our dances?* When I spoke to our parent volunteers, I brought that up, and one of the parents has access to a lighting company. So she's busy now looking at what kind of lights that they could potentially donate or give us at a reduced cost. One of the biggest resources we have here is our parents and their connections to companies, to businesses, to all those different things. So [I'm] doing

my best to use that to support the building.

Anabela Standish

What's something about you that most people wouldn't know?

Probably the travel piece, that we travel as much as we do. I also scuba dive, I've also been skydiving, I do all kinds of cuckoo stuff. I've driven race cars. I do a lot of neat things.

Emma Powell

*What is your purpose?
Why are you here on this Earth?*

[Laughs] That's the big question. That's what they say separates us from animals, right? When I was your age, they said it was tools, that humans had the ability to make tools. Now they found lots of animals that make tools, so now they say it's the ability to ponder our own existence; that's what makes humans special, right? You can go all the way back to Socrates, and they were asking those questions.

I find enjoyment and fulfillment from doing this work and engaging with young people, and I just want this to be a happy, vibrant place where everyone feels important, where everyone feels that sense of fulfillment. Because when you have that, I believe in this word: synergy. Are you familiar with the word synergy? Some of the parts is much greater than the whole. One plus one equals three or four, if you get synergy right. I really believe in that. So if we all work together, we all find ways to support each other, I think we can create something much bigger than ourselves.



Second Course!

Fiction, Poetry, and Art

Our Menu

“The Secrets of the School Building”, by Aidan Worsham	76
“Another Try”, by Blackbird	78
An except from “The Mimic Wolf: How It Almost Killed Me”, by Sala Addink	80
“Songs At Dusk”, by Madilyn Cruzado	82
“Happy Memories”, by Elizabeth Bench	83
“A Sunrise”, by Sadie Perrin	84
Artwork, by Samuel Dickey	85
Artworks, by Daria Sunduk	86



“The Secrets of the School Building”

by Aidan Worsham

In the school building, there are many hidden secrets, such as what they are hiding in the copy room, Ms. Foley’s malfunctioning clock, and why they are taping the windows. So, let’s start off with the staircase exit blocked and the odd positioning of the emergency exit. They blocked this exit because one kid—we will call him Ben to protect his identity—used to use this staircase every day to sneak food from the lunch room in between classes; he left his classes early and arrived to classes late and tardy. This sparked some interest, and another kid—we will call him Jack

to protect his identity—decided to follow Ben from the class he shared with him. So, Jack followed him, silently, until he saw him sneaking food. So, Jack thought this was a great idea and revealed himself to Jack and joined him in between every class.

Then another kid—we will call her Juliet—noticed this odd behavior in Jack, so she followed him, silently, until she found Ben and Jack sneaking food. Then the next day at lunch, Juliet stated her observations to her friend group, and they agreed it was a won-

derful idea. So eventually this whole crowd of students started sneaking lunch, and it wasn’t long until the staff found out. They knew there would always be a couple students sneaking food, even if they pushed severe punishments for such behavior. So they blocked off the exit and put a sophisticated mechanism to open the door if they so chose. They could open it, but no student had such means—until one fateful morning.

For personal reasons, the source of this next session prefers to stay anonymous, so we will call him David. David was having a normal day of school, until he found a key on the ground in the stairwell on his way to the second floor, but instead of returning it, he kept it. David was a kind of treasure hunter, although he had never really found anything. So when he found this mysterious key, he couldn’t help himself, and when lunch came around, he vainly started searching for a keyhole, to no avail, until he searched around the blocked exit, where he found a secret keyhole. So, he pushed the key he found into the lock and turned it. It unlocked.

David stepped inside. It was dark, then the lights mysteriously turned on. He would later learn that is the revision room. However, revising what exactly? We still don’t know why it is called that. Our source only remembers the next events vividly, so the next events will not be exact. David looked around and saw some odd mechanisms with cogs and more modern-looking equipment, the door behind him closed, and the lights short-circuited. David screams (I bet it was really high-pitched, even though David said otherwise,) and a gruff voice said, “You should not be here,

drop the key.” David, terrified out of his wits, dropped the key and said, shakily, “I’m sorry, sir, please don’t tell the dean.” “Get out,” the voice replied, and he grabbed David’s arm and led him to the door. David didn’t see his face, but afterwards he wasn’t approached by anyone on the matter, and he sure as heck wasn’t gonna tell anyone—until I made him crack, of course.

David wanted me to include a warning to anyone that goes near the blocked off exit, but I don’t believe anything bad would necessarily happen if you go near, he is just traumatized. What’s the worst that can happen, you get tickled to death? 🍉



“Another Try”
by Blackbird

I wake up again. In my paws, again, an egg.

It thrums with a power I do not understand.

I sit there, machinery thumping, door unlocking. This time, lightning-fast jaws. I drag my tail around in the puddle that’s formed. Better than most. You do not feel the bite for long, with teeth that fast.

“Don’t call ‘em train lizards 4 nuthin”, I remark to the egg.

It does nothing. Thrums away under paw.

I pick it up as I stand. It drips from the water on the floor.

I leave the shelter, out into the rain. It is hard to see. I do not see any threats, so I head forward. I am sure there are many.

It is dark in this place. There is water, there are boxes. If you look close, you can see the writhing things trapped inside.

I tap the box I stand on with my free paw. “Good morning :)”, I greet. It doesn’t respond.

I head forward, jump to another box. Another. I cannot hear much above the pound of rain, but I hear the sloshing of the hoard soon enough.

I peek my head over the edge, see the red, red, red of many, many centipedes. They clamor over each other, scrambling to get out of the water.

I lick my lips. I’m hungry. Always hungry, of course, but centipede fills nicely.

I bring the egg up, look at it. It thrums with that power.

I scramble for the pipe. I am too slow. It drags me in, with the centipedes and the rocks and the spears.

Faster and faster and *faster*, I slam into it all. Bones snap, everything bruises, everything hurts, and the crackling turns into that ghostly, horrible howl so easily.

The worst part is being torn apart, melded with everything else it tore apart, completely unrecognizable and completely enmeshed, just on the edge of the cosmic nothing, so close to the end of the tether. Here, I get the taste of freedom.

Here, I am not the cursed being, not the simple animal, not the contradiction of the joke and the reality. Here, I simply am.

Here, in these mere seconds, I can relax easy, feel weightless and happy, smile with no mouth, and see the empty (the void) with no eyes.

And then the wailing stops, and I materialize in the briefest time, before it bangs in my ears and slams me into the wall with a thud and a *cra*—

GOOD NIGHT, **GAMER.** 🍳



Photo by Zachary Spears on Unsplash

a special excerpt from...

“The Mimic Wolf: How it Almost Killed Me”

by Sala Addink

Dear Diary,

If people really think of me as a normal person, they need to reconsider. Yesterday, Jamie said that her little sister thought I was the most average person ever, and Jamie had to agree. “You should try to stand out, Amy. People will like you more if you actually try to look good.” I disagree, though. I prefer to blend in. After all, I don’t want anyone to know that I belong to the Pack. Yesterday, Ally told me that if I didn’t learn to control my powers, she would fill my bed with fine sand and itching powder. So I’ve had to practice harder than normal. Oh, sorry, I guess I’m not used to this new diary. Let me start over.

Hi, I’m Amirah, but you can call me Amy. I am a member of a secret society dedicated to keeping the world safe, called the Pack. My best friend’s name is Aliyah, but everyone calls her Ally. Jamie is my cousin, and her little sister is 3 months younger. They are step-sisters, but only in name; they kind of hate each other. I like to blend in because of my powers. I have the most unusual Talent in the world. I can turn into anything on earth, and I have a mind of my own, even when I’m something inanimate, like a rock or piano. Ally and my trainer, Miss Katie Noble, think that I have an even rarer Talent, something called Mimicry. Ally is a Mimic, but I was pretty sure I wasn’t. I honestly didn’t even start to believe them, I wasn’t even close to that powerful, until the signs began to show. And I finally came to realize that I wasn’t a Fluid, I was a—well, I don’t want to spoil it.

**Prologue:
I Get Eaten by a Frog.**

When Katie came with the news that Ally had been abducted, I had thought she was joking. We were at an alien abduction museum, so I thought it was a joke, and had been annoyed that I didn’t get to finish the tour. Now, though, I would give anything to have it be a joke. I was watching a room with a glass cabinet full of bottles, a bright green and magical light shining everywhere, and a young, unconscious, pale Ally laying on a hot pink bed, attached to wires, a bottle of her power on the table beside her. I studied her from my vantage point as a fly, but could sense that she was still alive. I turned into an eagle, screeched, “Wake up!!” in her ear, and, turning back into a fly, zoomed out of there. I could instantly hear her jump up, break all the bottles in the room (of course), and race after me. As soon as she got out, she turned a slightly healthier shade of pink and turned into a small snake, racing after me. And then we saw the frog. It sat there, watching us, and I was so scared I couldn’t turn back into myself. The frog gazed at us, bored, and almost lazily shot out his tongue and ate me.

“Ally!!! Katie!!!” I yelled. And then I yelled no more.

Check out the next issue for more on “The Mimic Wolf: How it Almost Killed Me”. Thanks! 🍓

“Songs at Dusk”

by Madilyn Cruzado

Isn't it interesting
 How much a song could change
 While they remain the same
 My car, lyrics, and patterns of vibrations in the air

It's so strange
 The wistful sting of night air
 Stars sprinkling dust as my heart crumbles
 'Neath the moon's glare.

Yet so familiar
 The knot of excitement
 Setting sun smiling on my wild hair
 Blowing through the air

Almost as though
 The setting sun and rising moon
 Sway the same song
 To sing their different tune 🥤

“Happy Memories”

by Elizabeth Bench

Close your eyes and you will see
 A lovely picture of you and me
 Nostalgic memories from the past
 Something in our hearts meant to last
 The love, the peace, in the air
 In a swan boat, at a fair
 We go back to these times when we're lost
 To see where we came from and what it cost
 For life goes on with all its sensories
 But it's all really for the happy memories 🍦

“A Sunrise”

by Sadie Perrin

A sunrise
Where hope lies
Orange fills the sky
So beautiful it makes me cry
The horizon beams with light

It doesn't seem real
It feels like a warm, shared meal
Comfort and the smell of baking bread
Brush strokes of deep red
Nothing but the sound of the light wind

The sun replaces the moon
I promise you, peace will be there soon
And so will I, waiting to embrace you
For when the sky turns to light blue
And a new day begin 🍊



Artwork

by Samuel Dickey



Artworks
by Daria Sunduk



Artworks
by Daria Sunduk



Artworks
by Daria Sunduk



Artworks
by Daria Sunduk

Potluck Puzzle!

What's inside the September issue?
Take this crossword to find out!



Across

1. Things you leave unshared
5. CECDN's new principal
7. Evan Wilson *always* wears these.
8. Recollections of the past
10. The opposite of dawn
11. Our wonderful Editor-in-Chief!
13. The dawn of a new day
15. A middle-eastern country, currently occupied by Israel

Down

2. A repeating pattern
3. Unwilling to break or bend
4. Everyone brings something to the table
6. Something soft to ease the sole
8. A pale imitation, a copycat
9. Our school!
10. A woodland mammal with hooves and antlers
12. An intense search
14. Pop music from Korean artists