

THE SYCAMORE TREE



All photography is courtesy of our amazing photography students: Zachary H., Haylee, H., Ella S., Hannah K., Keren L., Sophie S., Tessa, S., & Hesi M.

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Statistically, January is the coldest month of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. The first chilly flakes of snow may have even fallen for many already this year. Yet, in the cold severity of winter, one common flower manages to bloom – the carnation. It was fittingly deemed January’s official flower, as the carnation can bloom if temperatures hover just above freezing. It can persevere in a time when the cold of winter is thought to still the growth of all life.

Like the carnation, we must weather the difficult seasons of life. When times are trying or when temptations are beguiling, we must resist the urge to succumb. According to James 1:12, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” When we resist temptation at the most difficult times, we will be given the gift of life like the carnation. If the carnation can weather the coldest month of the year and still bloom, we too can weather challenges and obstacles.

The carnation is a resilient flower, but it only needs to weather the cold and storm of winter. As fallible humans, we face temptation and obstacles that the flower does not face. Nevertheless, we can overcome. God will take care of us in the most trying of times, and

we will be granted the gift of life when we resist temptation like the carnation who resists the cold.



Keren Linares
Photography



The third quarter of the school year begins on Wednesday, January 22nd, 2020.
There will be no school on January 20, 2020. Happy Martin Luther King Day!



-THE DIGITAL NEWSPAPER-

TRENDING NOW!

BY SHEMILY M-L ORTIZ

A New Year signifies a new start for most people. Along with the New Year comes new resolutions and goals. One of the most popular New Year resolutions concerns diets and weight loss. Gym memberships and exercise equipment sales usually spike in January of every year, but this year was a little different. This was in part due to new trends in technology. The first trend of 2020 that changed the course of gym membership sales are exercise classes streamed online. The reason this has become a popular trend this year is because it can be done through your smartphone, laptop, smart T.V., or iPad in real time - the same way we do our Sycamore Academy classes. You can get a subscription with a company such as Openfit.com which gives you access to a wide range of live streaming exercise classes of your choice. You can enjoy an exercise class with a live instructor along with other exercising classmates. For those of you who desire feedback on how you are doing while exercising, this would be a great opportunity. Since the instructor can see your moves, they can provide feedback at no additional charge. There are so many advantages to this new realm. You can work out in the comfort of your own home without feeling alone. It saves so much time. You no longer have to drive to a gym or bathe at the gym before you go to work or school. In some cases, it also means no more bulky exercise equipment in your home. Besides, you all know what happens with the bulky exercise equipment after the second week. In February, it becomes a coat rack and by April it's a garage sale item.

The next trend is the fruit-flavored Diet Coke by Coca-Cola. Although this product has been out since January of 2018, it somehow started trending in December of 2019. With all the new diet resolutions, dieting consumers are purchasing this product. The cans are sleek, slim and colorful. The names of the flavors are Feisty Cherry, Zesty Blood Orange, Twisted Mango and Ginger Lime. In January of 2019, they released two new flavors, which are Strawberry Guava and Blueberry Acai. If Diet Coke is your favorite drink, you might want to try these this New Year.

The next trend is the much talked about plant-based meat. It is believed that plant-based meats will be the next multi-billion dollar industry by the year 2030. Companies are racing to be the first to produce irresistible plant-based meat that consumers can't live without. Companies like Impossible Foods and Beyond Meats are leading the way in producing these products. Impossible Foods currently provides their product to companies like Burger King, White Castle, Little Caesars, Qdoba, Red Robin, Umami Burgers, and The Cheesecake Factory. Beyond Meats sells their products to companies like Carl's Jr., TGI Fridays, Del Taco, and Dunkin'. These companies are not only trying to accommodate vegans and vegetarians, but they are also marketing to all who want to change their eating habits and eat healthier. However, a vegan customer is currently suing Burger King because they feel Burger King's plant-based meat called the Impossible Burger is not totally meat free if it is being cooked on the same equipment as a meat burger. The customer feels their burger is being contaminated with animal meat by-products.

Another New Year trend is learning how to play a new musical instrument. This can be quite expensive. If you choose the piano as your instrument, I have an affordable solution for you: the Casio Music Key Premium Lighted Keyboard Piano. This keyboard is very popular right now. It teaches beginning students how to play the piano with step-by-step light-up buttons, removing the need for an instructor. There are many models to choose from, but most bring over one hundred built-in songs.

The last New Year trend seen in January came as a big shock - divorce. Although Inside Edition reports that divorce in America has decreased, it spikes in January. This was said to be in part due to people gaining confidence in the beginning of the year because they feel a New Year means a new beginning. Those who previously did not have the confidence to leave a bad relationship somehow gain the courage in January to start a new page in their lives. I don't personally like the word "divorce". This topic seemed so sad to me, which is why I chose to bring awareness to it. Not all resolutions are exciting. Some can be painful changes one person chooses that can affect an entire family. Let's make a new resolution as Sycamore students to pray for those who are starting the year with difficult changes in their lives.

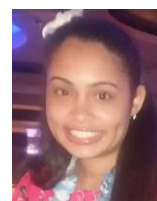
Meet the Authors and Editor!



Angelina Castillo is a freshman at Sycamore Academy, and she loves playing the violin and piano in her free time.



Keren Linares is a sophomore at Sycamore Academy, and her favorite class is Biology. She loves science, but her dream is to become a firefighter!



Shemily M-L Ortiz is a junior at Sycamore Academy. Traveling tropical islands is a pastime that Shemily frequently engages in. However, knitting and other crafty hobbies are enjoyable to her as well!



Hannah Klingbeil is a freshman at Sycamore Academy. Training horses and playing the flute are some of Hannah's hobbies.



Nicole Deoso is a sophomore at Sycamore Academy. Volleyball and basketball are some sports that she enjoys doing in her spare time.



Sarah Radke is a senior who adores her Culinary Arts class at Sycamore Academy.

LARAYNE HALL



ALWAYS SHARING, ALWAYS LEARNING

BY KEREN LINARES

For Mrs. LaRayne Hall this is, happily, the third year in which she has been part of our Sycamore Academy staff. This beloved teacher was born and raised on a small farm located in central Wisconsin and is the eldest in a family of six children. Growing up, Mrs. LaRayne attended the local high school and after graduating went on to study at the University of Wisconsin. Eventually, she attended Andrews University where she ultimately decided to become a schoolteacher. Later on, she acquired a master's degree in school leadership in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Subsequently, Mrs. LaRayne began her teaching career in a one-room school in South Dakota. After teaching in South Dakota for some time, she started a school in her home where she had the privilege of teaching several students, some of which had physical handicaps.

Because Mrs. LaRayne frowned upon being a teacher as a child, becoming a teacher was an amazing accomplishment. Yet, it was while she was in college that the idea of teaching fully entered her mind. In fact, Mrs. LaRayne describes specifically that the thought of becoming a teacher came soon after she gave her heart to the Lord. She not only became a great teacher but has also taught in a traditional school setting in schools throughout the states of Oklahoma, Florida, and Tennessee. Additionally, she also served as school principal for a time! With almost forty years of teaching experience, Mrs. LaRayne just couldn't see how she could possibly stop teaching to give way to retirement. When the opportunity to teach for Sycamore Academy presented itself, she eagerly joined the staff.

Mrs. LaRayne genuinely loves her job as a teacher because she enjoys her students and delights in all the things that they bring and offer. Her various pupils have taught her patience and acceptance. Furthermore, she describes the profession of a teacher as a means of providing adventurous and fun interactive moments. Interacting with and getting to know her students is her favorite part of being a teacher! Mrs. LaRayne shares that she learned one very important lesson: you never stop learning.

For this teacher, lover of sharing and receiving knowledge, a 'typical school day' consists of waking up, having her reading and "thankfulness" journaling time, doing her daily chores, and eating breakfast. Afterwards, she formulates her lesson plan for the day and then commences

teaching her classes for that particular day. Mrs. LaRayne stays busy teaching all her amazing and wonderful online students. After she finishes teaching some of her students, Mrs. LaRayne does more chores then proceeds on to her Chinese students. Mrs. LaRayne teaches Language Arts for the Sycamore Academy grades 3-6 and Social Studies for grades 5-8. She also teaches Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science for her Chinese students. Her absolute favorite class to teach is Language Arts.

This dedicated teacher is an optimistic encourager as well as an avid nature and animal lover. She frequently engages in her favorite hobbies that consist of singing and reading about organic gardening. Mrs. LaRayne also enjoys playing tennis and doing horsemanship.

Being an enthusiastic animal lover, Mrs. LaRayne is the proud owner of a German shepherd named Lily and also of a beautiful horse accordingly named Beauty. Lily, a rescue that Mrs. LaRayne adopted as a puppy, is now 2 ½ years old and is Mrs. LaRayne's constant companion. Lily frequently visits the online classes, which has endeared her to the students. Beauty is a living testament to how God answers his children's fervent prayers. In November 2019, Beauty injured her eye. Due to the extent of Beauty's injury, it was believed that she might eventually lose her eye; God had other plans. Mrs. LaRayne related Beauty's story to her Sycamore students who fervently kept troubled Beauty in their prayers. Soon thereafter, Beauty fully recovered with only a small scar on her eye. As Mrs. LaRayne gratefully mentioned, "I believe God honored their (her students') faithful prayers." God's mighty power of healing manifested itself in one of Mrs. LaRayne's most beloved pets.

Mrs. LaRayne wants her students to not only experience the wonder of learning but also experience the wonder of trusting God to do the impossible. Stories, like the story of Beauty, are an inspiring source of motivation and knowledge. She challenges her students "to ask God to give them stories in their lives". With each life experience, we have a story to tell others. By passing on these stories, we can bless and motivate others to trust in God's plan. Mrs. LaRayne believes that God reveals Himself more personally in each individual's own story, and in this way, acquaints individuals with His wondrous power and love.

-THE DIGITAL NEWSPAPER-

SYCAMORE STUDIES

This month we would like to highlight some of middle school's best poetry by Daniella (top), Elyana (middle), and Tyler (bottom). We also love the work of our amazing elementary students doing their science labs (bottom)!

Gymnastics
 Fun, Dangerous
 Flipping, Running, Jumping
 Very energetic, Superbly Strengthening
 Splashing, Coastering, Stroking
 Amusement, Chilling
 Swimming

I once thought that math was a bore,
 Arithmetic gross to my core,
 My textbook I tossed,
 To my tests said, "get lost!"
 And now I like math more and more.

There once was a cat on a couch,
 Who thought he could knit a pouch,
 So he found a needle
 And poked a beetle,
 And the beetle flew off and said "Ouch!"



THE SPIRITUAL CORNER

BY NICOLE DEOSO

In His life, Jesus did good works for everyone near. He gave sight to the sightless, cured lepers, and fed thousands with just fish and bread. His works were only to benefit others. As each day passes, we must strive to replicate Christ's kindness. Philippians 2:13 says, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Whether we begin by donating food to an animal shelter, holding a door open for someone, or demonstrating gratefulness, we can emulate Christ's kind nature.

Challenge yourself and your family to complete acts of kindness each day. Set your goal by making a small line on the inside of a clear jar or vase. Have each family member drop a marble or a piece of paper with the act of kindness on it into the jar. Try to reach the jar's line by the end of the day! If you choose to leave pieces of paper in the jar, read them aloud and reflect on how kindness can change people's lives.

Exercise sincere acts of kindness each day. Remember, no matter how difficult it may be to be kind, we should never grow weary of brightening others' lives by being thoughtful of them. Follow in Christ's footsteps today and show others your thoughtfulness.

"But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing." ~ 2 Thessalonians 3:13

CRAFTS & COOKING

Reusable Hand Warmers

Is it snowing where you live? Is there an icy chill in the air? Are your hands penetrated by the freezing cold every time you walk outside? If you answered yes to any of these questions (and even if you didn't), this is the perfect craft for you! You can stick these small hand warmers in your pockets or simply carry them around. Here's how you make them:



Gather these few materials:

- Sewing machine (if you don't have a sewing machine you can use a needle and thread just as well 😊)
- Pins
- Thread to match fabric
- 1/8 yard of flannel fabric
- Rice
- Piece of paper or card stock to use as a funnel

Directions:

1. Cut fabric into desired size, I have found that the best finished size is 3"x2". To account for seam allowances, cut the fabric into 3 1/2" x 2 1/2" rectangles. The bigger the size, the longer they will retain their heat.
2. Pin the two pieces of fabric together so that the wrong sides are facing out and the right sides are facing each other.
3. Start sewing in the middle of one side 1/4" from the edge. Sew around all the sides. Stop about 1" from where you started.
4. Cut off the points of the corners of your fabric. (Be careful not to cut your stitches!) Turn your fabric right side out.
5. Roll your paper or card stock into a funnel and pour enough rice into the hand warmer to fill it about 3/4 full.
6. Sew the opening closed.
7. Pop your hand warmers in the microwave for about thirty to forty seconds or until they are the desired temperature. Enjoy the warmth!
8. If desired, place the hand warmers into a tightly sealed bag and freeze for a cold pack.

EDITOR'S REMARKS

Another year has elapsed, but another, better year lies ahead. As we progress through the first month of another year, recall memories of supportive family, valued friends, and rich experiences. These defined our past, shape our present, and will affect our future. Remember past years and thank those who influenced them, but anticipate future years nonetheless. It will fill memory with even more experiences, both joyous and arduous. In this new year, we must learn to look two ways: to past experiences and to the future experiences of the new year, which will shape us into the charismatic, compassionate people God wishes us to be. Happy new year!

Sarah