

THE SYCAMORE TREE



All photography is courtesy of our photography students: Haylee H., Britain H., Verneka C., Ella S., Hesi M., Noah K., Kaedi S., and Makena H.

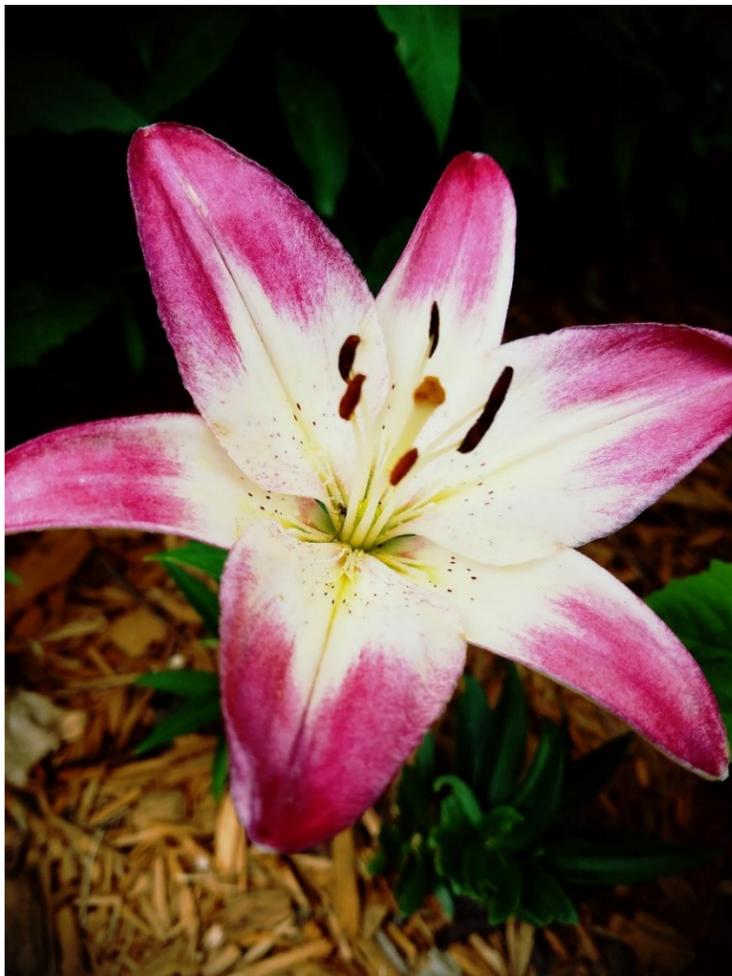
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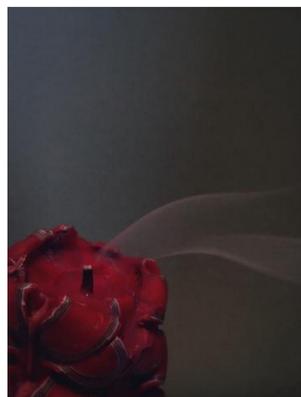
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The first day of spring is also known as the spring equinox, a word derived from the Latin words “aequus” (equal) and “nox” (night). Together, these words mean equal night – a fitting phrase because the spring equinox is the one day where day and night are of perfectly equal length (twelve hours each).

The spring equinox has had an interesting cultural and architectural influence. For example, the spring equinox has a unique effect on the ancient Mayan ruins of Chichen Itza. Every spring equinox, a snake-like shadow appears to slither down the steps of one pyramid. At the bottom of the pyramid, the shadow blends with a serpent head sculpture. However, the perfect architecture of this pyramid is fascinating because the ancient Mayans believed that serpents were what moved the sun, moon, and stars across the sky. Moreover, Mayan mythology considered the serpents to also be harbingers of new beginnings, represented by the shedding of a snake’s skin and the astronomical periods of the sky (signified by equinoxes and solstices). The coming of the snake down their pyramid on the equinox architecturally exemplified the Mayan idea of a new beginning.

While we do not believe that serpents move the heavens, we do know that God created these astronomical bodies. Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” That also means that the heavens and the earth were created, placed, and timed perfectly for us. They were timed perfectly to give us two perfect days each year with twelve hours of light and twelve hours of dark. Whether he timed the universe to show us that some days are more balanced than others or to show us that new beginnings are always possible throughout the year, one thing is certain. God’s presence has affected everything: the heavens, architecture, cultures, and our faith.



Our 2019-2020 school yearbook is almost complete. To help us complete it, please turn in a yearbook photo to lori@sycamoreacademy.com.

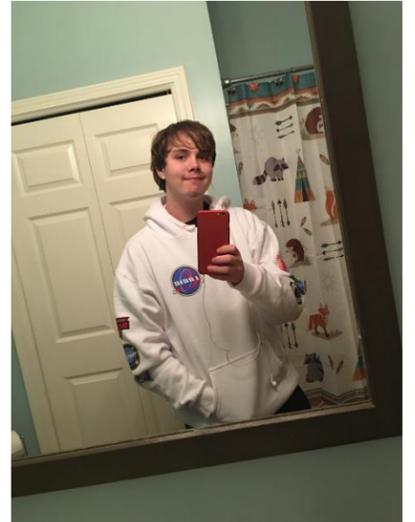
The fourth quarter will begin on March 25.

Happy St. Patrick’s Day!

Can you find the hidden green four-leaf clover in this newsletter?



ZACHARY HOLTSCLAW



Our Own IT Guy

By Angelina Castillo

It was May 18, 2002 in Maryland when Zachary Holtsclaw was born. Now seventeen-years-old, Zachary lives in Hiawassee, Georgia. Hiawassee is a small town next to the Chatuge Lake in the North Georgia mountains. He lives with his parents and his little sister Zoey who is nine years old. Joining the family is a black and white cat named Rebel.

You will find Zachary taking pictures and working on remote-control cars in his spare time. After his father bought him a small remote-control car when he was little, Zack began toying with it. He was hooked! In fact, he has worked on remote-control cars for so many years it may just become a lifetime hobby. Zachary's second hobby, filming short videos, eventually morphed into his third hobby, photography. Originally, he only took photography in the tenth grade to complete a fine arts credit. However, photography opened a whole new world to Zack. He enjoyed it so much that he actually purchased his own camera. As a gifted photographer, he enjoys photographing everything from cars to nature. After he completes his schoolwork and hobbies, he still finds the time to enjoy playing video games, watching movies, and listening to music.

Zack is homeschooled and has been attending Sycamore Academy since the fourth grade. His teachers have watched him grow up before their eyes over these last eight years into a generous, kind young man. Other students have watched him develop into an outgoing, charismatic, and compassionate friend. While he may be states away from other students, he has still forged lifelong friendships with other students. Moreover, his passion for photography has allowed him to encourage and advise other photography students and friends. Attending an online school has allowed Zack the freedom to take family trips and adjust his schedule as needed. (And, he enjoys the short commute to class.)

When Zachary completes high school, he is planning to attend college online. He is hoping to join Arizona State University's great online program. He is excited to achieve a degree in information technology, which will allow him to become a health IT, software developer, computer programmer, or research scientist. His current peers describe Zack as one of the most technologically savvy people they know. In fact, this gift for technology has helped many students fix, delay, or troubleshoot computer issues, which is an invaluable resource for online students. His talent for technology has been a gift for Sycamore Academy students and will continue to benefit those he will associate with in the future.

Zachary's advice to younger students is to find something to work towards. Often when you work without a goal, you lose your motivation. Having a goal and sticking to it is the best way to keep your motivation. Zach's favorite Bible verse is John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

-THE DIGITAL NEWSPAPER-

TRENDING NOW!

BY SHEMILY M-L ORTIZ

Springtime is here which means more time outdoors enjoying social activities. It has been my experience that people who do not know the homeschooled community believe we do not have a social life. They believe we miss out on activities normally provided by public schools. One such activity is prom. Recently, I did a search on homeschool prom programs and found they are available in many states. If you have never been to a prom, there are things you'll need to know. Each prom program has their set of regulations. Some of their rules state only the student attending and their parent can sign them up via email only and only that student and their parent can receive information on times, dates and locations. This is done in their efforts to keep the students attending safe. Other prom programs have phone numbers your parents can call to sign you up. Some require your parents sign you up through their Facebook page only. I found the easiest and safest way to find a homeschool prom program near you is to contact your local homeschooling coalition.

An additional consideration is attire. They have very strict rules on what you can and cannot wear. Occasionally prom programs are theme-based and you must adhere to their theme. I found the local homeschool prom program near me has a theme they go by every year. This can also dictate the style and color of the tuxedo or ball gown you will wear. Check with them for rules on refunds if you do not comply. A few of the homeschool prom programs that were willing to communicate with me said they sold out on their prom tickets within the first few weeks the tickets were on sale. If you plan to attend these events, now is the time to find the local prom program near you and purchase your tickets. If they are sold out, sign up with them now so they can alert you when tickets open up again next year.

If you plan on attending a homeschool prom, here are some styles trending now. As always, tuxedos with a vest and bow tie are always a classic choice for boys. Boys and girls may choose to match their outfits with one another. Years ago, the cummerbund was part of a boy's outfit. In recent years, it's become less popular, as boys are opting for more tailored pants. However, make sure to follow the rules of your prom program. If they require the cummerbund, it's best to wear it than be turned away at the door.

Styles trending now for girls are royal blue ball gowns, yellow prom dresses, and metallic shimmering dresses (iridescent dresses). Then there are two-piece ball gowns with a solid color on the top and all floral on the bottom of the dress. Some popular brands that sell these two-piece dresses are Sherri Hill and Jovani. Again, remember to check the rules and regulations from the prom program on all clothing.

Lastly, the next thing trending now is the Coronavirus. It has been the talk everywhere and now it has made its way to the United States. For this reason, we should all exercise normal precautions. If you were not eating healthy before, now is the time to start. It is more difficult to fight any virus if you have a weak immune system. Boost your immune system by eating healthy portions of vegetables, fruits, grains, proteins, and foods with vitamin C. Stay away from junk food to maintain a healthy immune system. When heading to public places like the grocery store where you may touch shopping carts or other things, make sure you wash your hands often and carry hand sanitizer to prevent further contaminations. Not enough is known about the Coronavirus or if it can affect our pets. Please remember to pray for those affected by this virus and their families.

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.

Traci Nietling



*Inspiring Young Learners,
Encouraging Hard Workers*

By Keren Linares

If one had to describe Mrs. Nietling, they would describe her as a very fun, interactive, and understanding person - an overall amazing teacher to have! This is now her third delightful year of working as a teacher for Sycamore Academy. During these past three years, she has notoriously distinguished herself as being a “fun” teacher among her students. This arises from the fact that she ensures that laughter is always the invited guest to each class.

Mrs. Traci Nietling's life has revolved around the Great Lakes State. Born in the bustling city of Detroit, Michigan and later raised in Lake City, Michigan, Mrs. Nietling attended Lake City Elementary and High School. During her childhood, Mrs. Nietling aspired to become a professional ice skater and later on, in her teens, showed interest in working in orthodontics. Remarkably, it wasn't until she grew up and had children of her own that she realized she was blessed with the amazing gift of helping children learn.

Acknowledging this, Mrs. Nietling went to Northwestern Michigan college to study early child development, which she first applied when homeschooling her own children. She attended Baker College, where she finally studied to become a schoolteacher. After her children grew up, Mrs. Nietling proceeded with her teaching aspiration by working as teacher for the Northview Seventh-Day Adventist School in Cadillac, Michigan. Here, she taught school grades 1-4 and taught language arts to grades 6-8. Currently, Mrs. Nietling teaches grades 5-6 and 7-8 Bible; grades 3-4 and 7-8 Science; and also grade 7-8 Language Arts for Sycamore Academy.

Mrs. Nietling's favorite part of teaching is the immense enjoyment she experiences whenever she is with her students. Her students have taught her many things, such as how to create a stronger relationship with Christ. Understanding the importance of building our trust in Him, her students have also taught her that doubting in the Lord during difficult times is merely a step in creating a strong relationship in God, not a sign of weak faith or disbelief. As one of her students once said, “We are to be walking-talking flashlights!”; by this she meant that we should act like a Christian light to others in dark times. Her experience as a teacher has taught her patience, both with herself and with her students, as well as empathy towards others.

Even though she considers herself a very organized person, Mrs. Nietling delights in being in the great outdoors. Favorite pastimes and hobbies for her include reading, kayaking, walking, and running. Being a family-oriented person she particularly takes pleasure in accomplishing outdoor activities with her own family. Her favorite animals are elephants and dolphins, and she readily confesses to all colors being her favorite!

Mrs. Traci Nietling is a fun teacher and a motivational encourager to her students. Her main goal as a teacher is to help students believe in themselves: that they can do whatever good they set their mind to no matter what the circumstances. Mrs. Nietling always reminds her students that no matter what their grades might be, this never determines who they are as individuals. Inspiring her students to work hard, to do their best, and to have a personal relationship with Christ is always uppermost in Mrs. Nietling's mind. Her advice to all young people is summarized in the following words: “Don't let someone else's opinion of you become your own [opinion] and determine who you are. You are a child of the King - this is your true value.”

SYCAMORE ACADEMY'S DIGITAL NEWSLETTER

SYCAMORE STUDIES

Our students are doing amazing things every month! This month, we would like to highlight the dedicated work of Andrea (top), and the beautiful artwork of our art students. Hannah (middle) and Makena (bottom) are sketching some incredible faces and facial features!

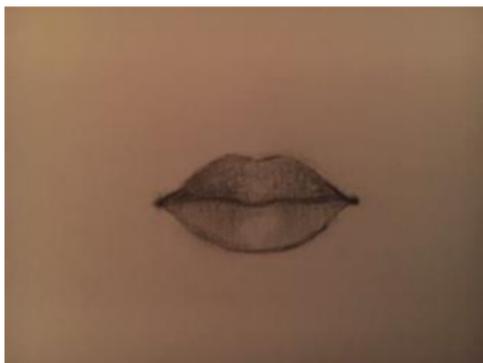
CLOTHES FROM THE COMMUNITY

By Sarah Radke



Giving back to the community rewards individuals with the satisfaction that they are doing something for good. Andrea White, a senior in high school is one of those people who reaps extreme satisfaction from giving back to the community. Every week, she knits one or two scarves that measure between five and six feet long. According to Andrea, "You can learn a lot of perseverance from knitting these really long scarves." Each scarf is knitted from hand-picked, dark colored yarn. She started knitting scarves in

2016 for friends and family, but she later began to donate her scarves to the homeless. To her, giving to others who have less than she does is both rewarding and fulfilling. Now, she is a part of her church's homeless outreach, donating most of the scarves she makes. Good luck in your knitting, Andrea!



THE SPIRITUAL CORNER

BY NICOLE DEOSO

We know Jesus died on the cross for us so that we have an opportunity to go to Heaven when He returns. We must also do our part to make it to Heaven; Jesus gives us the bridge to walk across, but we still must use our legs to walk to the other side. Jesus already did the difficult part. All we need to do is lay our sins down for Him to cover with His blood.

As a fun experiment to show how Jesus can cleanse our sins, get the following materials: two clear vases or cups, water, food coloring, and bleach. For the first vase, add 1 cup of water. This water represents us. Add a few drops of the food coloring to the water, which represents sin in our lives. Slowly add 2 tablespoons of bleach to the water. This represents the cleansing power of Jesus as the bleach clears the water.

According to 1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." All we have to do is ask Him for forgiveness and pray. If a man like King David can be called "a man after my own heart" by God, we can also be righteous in God's eyes when we accept the blood of Jesus Christ.

SYCAMORE ACADEMY'S DIGITAL NEWSLETTER

CRAFTS & COOKING

Cherry Blossom Tree Craft

On March 20, we will begin celebrating the National Cherry Blossom Festival. In fact, cherry blossom trees only bloom for a short amount of time before they pass. Yet, the brevity of these blooms still creates picturesque views. Try this quick and easy craft to artistically capture the nature of a cherry blossom tree!



Materials:

1. Pink and brown paint
2. Plastic bottle
3. Paper plate
4. Long piece of paper
5. Paint brush

Instructions:

1. Use the brown paint to create a long, curvy line that goes the length of the paper. This is your main tree, so be sure to paint branches coming off the trunk.
2. Place the pink paint on a paper plate. Dip the bottom of the plastic bottle in the pink paint. Dab the bottle next to the branches, refilling the plate with paint when needed. You may add as many flowers as you want.
3. When you are done, let the paint dry. Enjoy your cherry blossom tree!

Fudgesicle Frosty

Warmer days are ahead! Perhaps one of the most recognized summer sweets is the popsicle, and by 1946 the fudgesicle had been invented. Get ready for these warmer days with this refreshing and sweet frosty inspired by one of the most iconic popsicle flavors.



Ingredients:

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup agave nectar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ of an avocado, peeled and pitted
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cocoa powder
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup almond milk
- 3 cups ice
- 4 large dates

Directions:

1. Add ingredients in order to the blender.
2. Secure the blender lid and whizz everything on medium speed until the frosty is smooth.
3. Divide the frosty between three glasses. Enjoy!

EDITOR'S REMARKS

Spring is right around the corner, bringing fresh greenery, baby animals, and thawed lakes. In fact, spring was named for the arrival of new life after winter (the "springing" up of flowers and streams from the ground); it is representative of revival. However, spring does not have to be the only thing that revives. As the school year progresses, we can revive our motivation to finish the school year. It is often hard to study when the birds are singing and the flowers are growing outside, but the school year only has another two months left. Don't let spring fever quell the desire to finish the last quarter of the school year. Good luck in these next few weeks!

Sarah