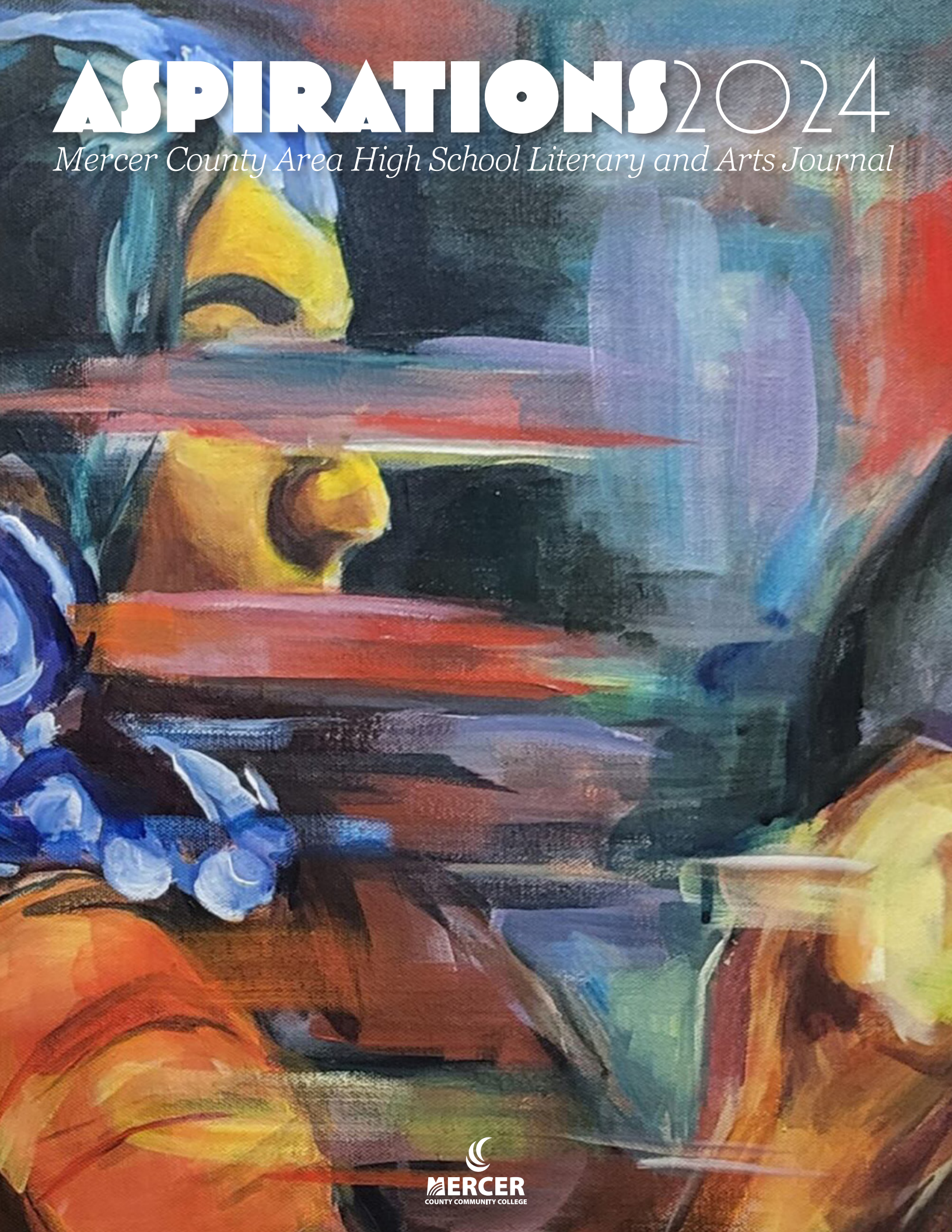


ASPIRATIONS 2024

Mercer County Area High School Literary and Arts Journal



ASPIRATIONS2024

Mercer County Area High School Literary and Arts Journal

Published by Mercer County Community College
West Windsor, New Jersey

Cover art by Arshia Chakrabarti

Editor's Message

Aspirations 2024, a literary and arts magazine published by Mercer County Community College, is proud to celebrate and present the talents of area high school students. For decades, the literary and visual works collected in *Aspirations* have showcased students' hopes, dilemmas, questions, and insights.

Once again, the creativity displayed by students helps us see both the familiar with renewed attention and the unfamiliar with a satisfying sense of recognition. Still others have contributed to this publication in important ways. We would like to thank the parents, friends, family, and teachers who supported the development of our writers and artists.

Thanks go to MCCC President Dr. Deborah E. Preston and our Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Robert Schreyer for their support; to Sam Guarino in Mercer's Marketing and Publications Department for their work designing and laying out this journal; to Brad Kent for setting up and maintaining the *Aspirations* web page; and to Lyndsey Goehrig for the dependable and effective way she managed submissions, contact with schools, and the many details of the selection, editing and proofing process. Finally, I want to thank Robert Kleinschmidt, Dean of Liberal Arts, for his help with this publication project. Mercer's commitment to the arts makes projects such as this one possible. Our judges selected these works from among many entries. We thank the following distinguished panel for their discerning sensibilities and commitment to the students: Lucas Kelly, Kerri O'Neil, and Jacqueline Vogtman.

Nicole Homer
Professor of English
Editor, *Aspirations 2024*, Mercer County Community College

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The Modern Woman The Creator Of Gods

Arshia Chakrabarti

West Windsor-Plainsboro High School South (grade 12)

Arshia Chakrabarti is a high school student navigating what it means to be an artist in a flux of interpersonal chaos and internal order. She has studied art in school for four years and has worked with media such as charcoal, acrylic paint, pen and ink, watercolor, oil pastel, and graphite. In her free time, she enjoys wrestling with her puppy and listening to music.



2700 Steps

Tiffany Guaman

Hightstown High School (grade 10)

Tiffany Guaman loves to spend time outside and take pictures. She enjoys listening to all kinds of music, exploring new places in nature, and riding bikes.

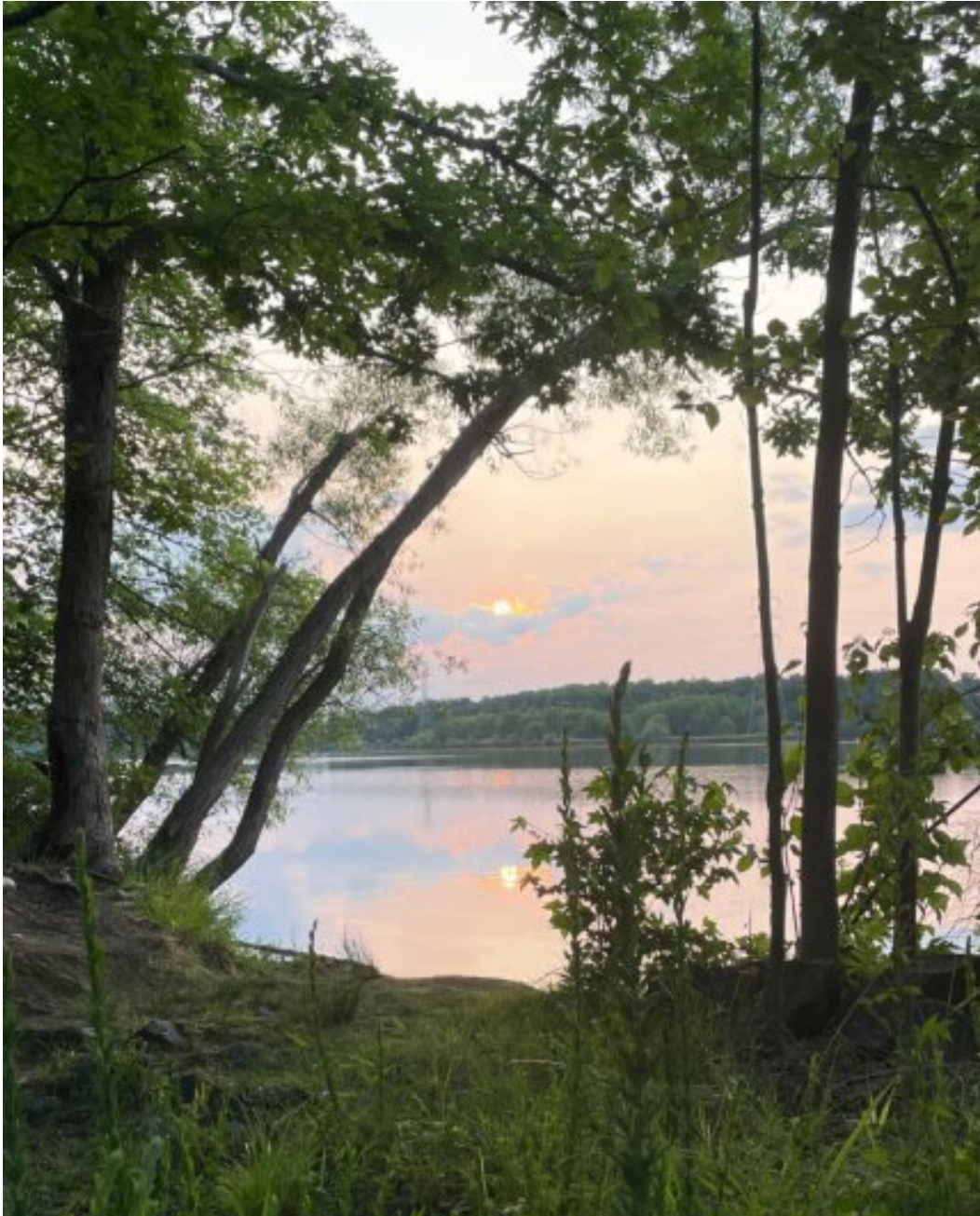


A Common Sun

Sarah Solano

Hightstown High School (grade 10)

Sarah Solano is a newcomer in the world of photography, but is an eager learner ready to grow her skills. With a passion for art in various forms, Sarah Solano is enthusiastic to practice and present her ideas using the skills she has learned at Hightstown High School.



A Tree in the Light

Hayden Bustos

Hightstown High School (grade 10)

Hayden Bustos loves taking pictures of nature. She finds it very relaxing and calming to take pictures and bring life to plants.



Abyssal Night

Ethan Encalada

Hightstown High School (grade 12)

Ethan Encalada is a person who likes to learn by dabbling in a little bit of everything. A person who likes to observe and think about why things may be the way that they are. A hard-working individual who does what he does in order to admire his own work and not because it was asked of him. While living in a world as interesting as earth, there is always room for wonder and curiosity, and that's what he's all about.

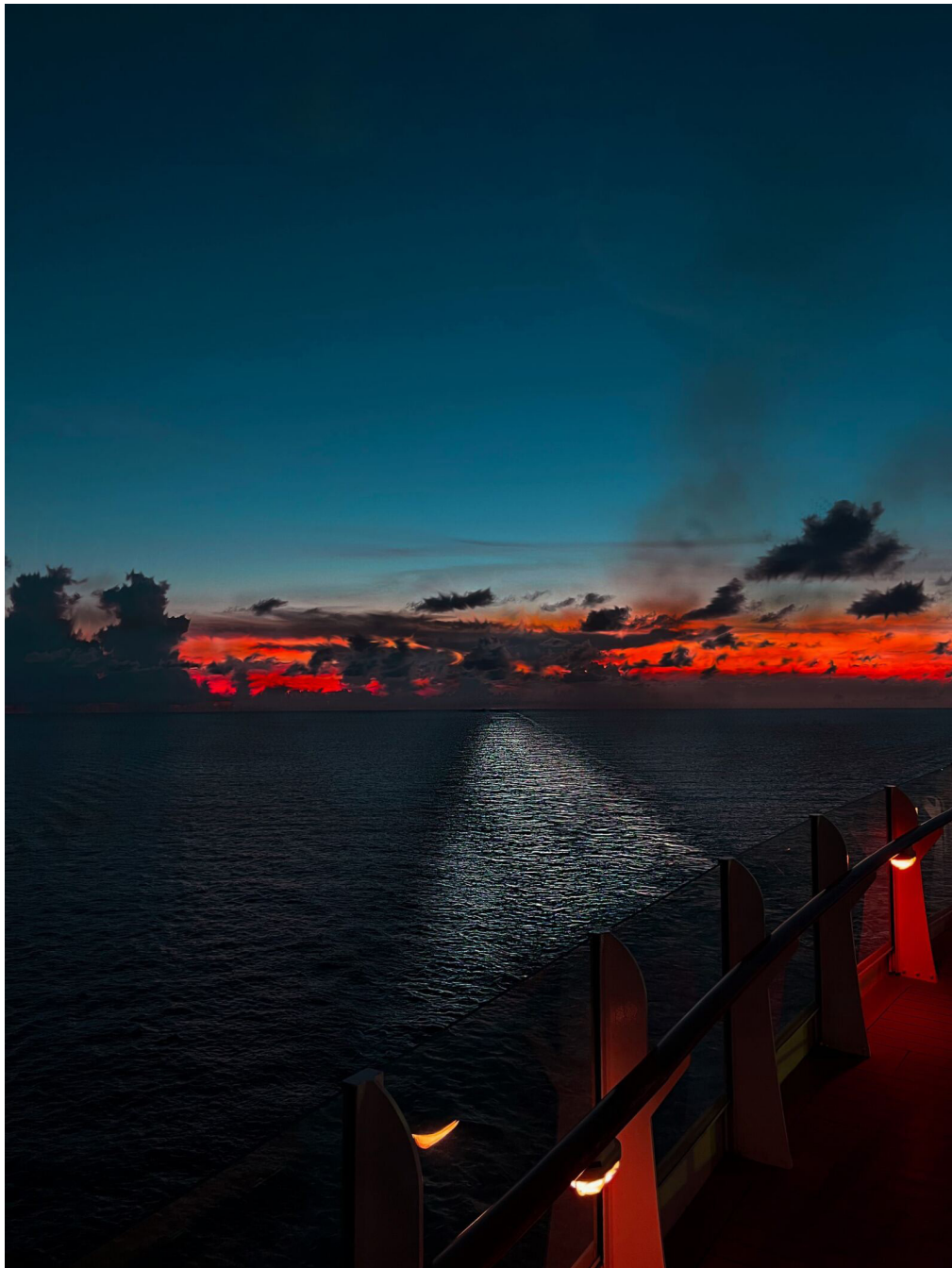


Alone at Sea

Shannon Lockwood

Hightstown High School (grade 12)

Shannon Lockwood is a high school student that fell in love with photography after taking it her junior year. On top of that, she has been in marching band all four years of high school and enjoys playing the guitar, as well as spending time with her friends.



Arshia Devouring Her Lunch

Arshia Chakrabarti

West Windsor-Plainsboro High School South (grade 12)



Beauty of Colors

Lavina Rivera

West Windsor-Plainsboro High School South (grade 12)

Lavina Rivera loves watching crime shows. She is planning on going to college for Criminal Justice and pursuing her career as a crime investigator.

Beauty of Colors

In the heart of this earth, so vast and so wide,
There's a wide range of colors, a magnificent tide.
From the fairest of creams to the deepest of browns
Every skin tone sparkles in the sunlight, and in brilliance abounds.

Behold the beauty of colors, an exquisite array.
Each and every hue tells a story, in its own special way.
Like a painter's masterpiece, each shade has its part.
Add depth and dimension, a work of living art.

The richness of ebony, like the midnight sky.
The warmth of golden sands, under the sun's eye.
The blush of rosy petals, a delicate embrace.
Each tone a testament of beauty of every race.

No one shade outshines, for it's diversity we find.
A symphony of shades, a treasure of every kind.
Let's celebrate the differences that make us unique.
For the beauty of colors is the language we all speak.

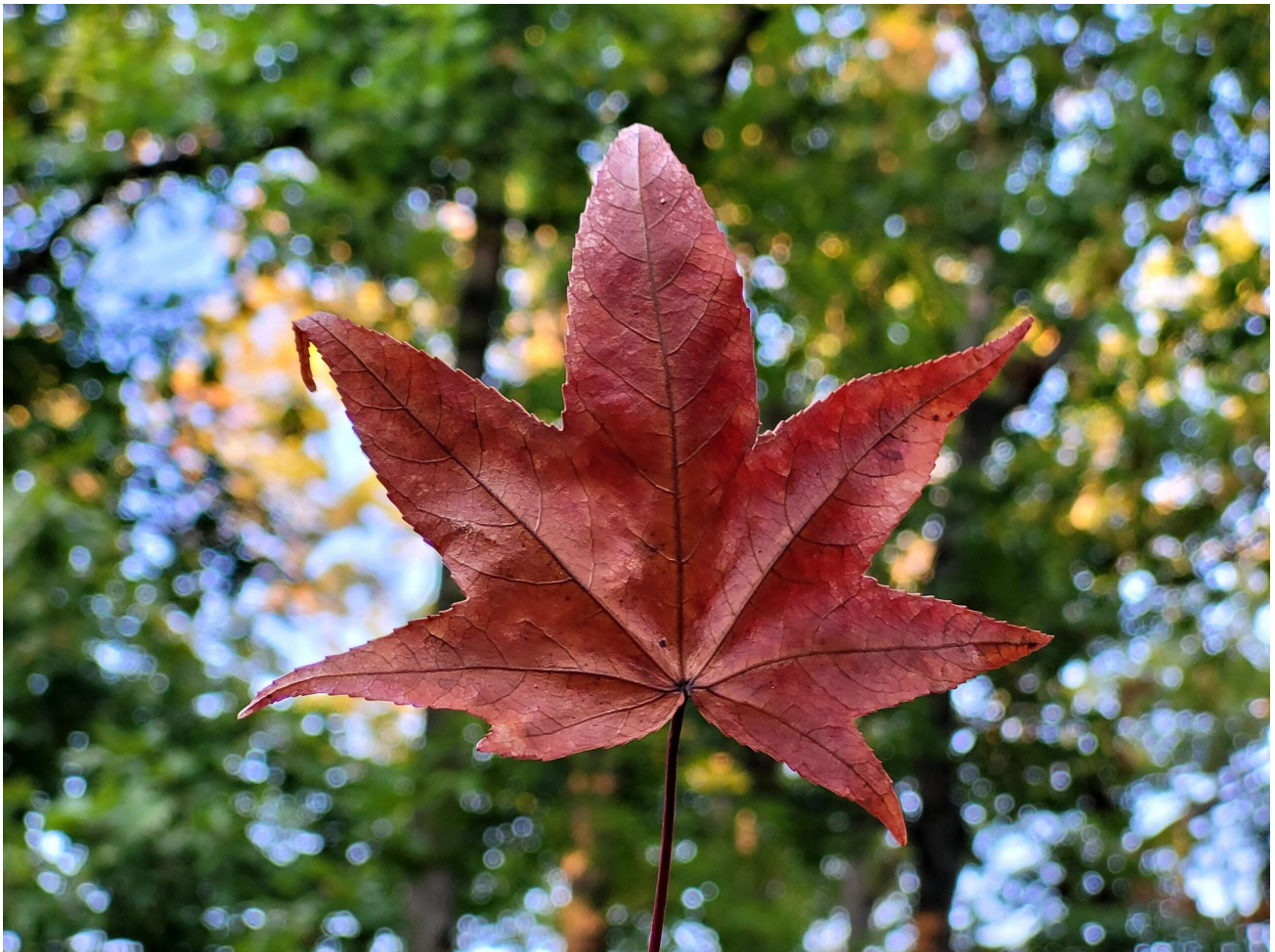
So let's embrace the spectrum, let our true colors shine.
Together in harmony, a world so sublime.
For the beauty of colors, in every hue and grace,
Is a reminder that all are lovely, in this beautiful world.

Beauty of Fall

Lakshita Kapoor

Hightstown High School (grade 12)

Lakshita Kapoor is a senior in high school. She likes to take photographs and loves to paint. She is also on the tennis team and one of the heads of the Robotics team in her school. She is looking forward to college life.



Blending Into Oblivion

Arshia Chakrabarti

West Windsor-Plainsboro High School South (grade 12)



Blinding Red

Xylon Macas

Hightstown High School (grade 9)

Xylon enjoys photography as he uses it as an outlet for his creativity. He hopes to one day pursue a career in photography.



Blooming Diamond

Medina Gjonbalaj

Hightstown High School (grade 12)

Medina Gjonbalaj enjoys taking walks, playing video games, and cats. She likes spending time with her family, as well as her friends.



Blooming Petals

Mahi Patel

Hightstown High School (grade 9)

When I grow up I dream to be a florist.



Brooklyn Bridge

Ryan Kohdong-Kumolontang

Hightstown High School (grade 11)

Ryan Kohdong Kumolontang loves to play ice hockey for the school. He enjoys taking photos on his phone, working out in the gym, playing video games on his pc, and learning how to draw.



Burano In Color

Alexandra Bebawi

Hightstown High School (grade 12)

Alex Bebawi loves to take photos of wildlife, landscapes, and other outdoor subjects. She also enjoys spending time with friends and listening to various styles of music.



Cielo de Trenton

Elida Paola Martínez Escobar

Trenton Ninth Grade Academy (grade 9)

Paolo is a bright, motivated, young woman who recently emigrated from El Salvador. She is an incredible mentor to her younger siblings and a passionate art student, and she is picking up English very quickly. Beyond her love of soccer and tennis, Paola is dedicated to growing as an artist through her participation in Let's Film Español, where she is learning about photography, digital arts, and film at the Joseph R. Halsey Foundation of the Arts.



City Lights

Lauren Tom

Hightstown High School (grade 12)

Lauren Tom enjoys painting and photography. She ran Cross Country. She was accepted into Rutgers and Rowan University and plans to major in Forensic Psychology.



Eagle

Miguel Tafur Jimenez

Hightstown High School (grade 11)

Miguel Tafur is a kid that goes to Hightstown High School and loves to take visual art classes. Miguel enjoys taking pictures of outdoor subjects and likes to learn new stuff to become a better student and person. Miguel drives a Mazda, he likes to go to the gym, and play soccer with his friends.



Early Bird

Alexandra Bebawi

Hightstown High School (grade 12)



El Color de la Oportunidad

Angela Pierre

Trenton Ninth Grade Academy (grade 9)

Angela is a fun-loving lady who has recently emigrated from the Dominican Republic. She attends Trenton Ninth Grade Academy, where she has been dedicated to learning English - she is picking it up quickly! Fun fact: Angela has lived in Brazil for some of her childhood, so she speaks Portuguese as well. Angela loves to dance, too. She is also enrolled in Let's Film Español through the Joseph R. Halsey Foundation of the Arts.



enchanted rose

Christopher Hegarty

Hightstown High School (grade 11)

Chris Hegarty enjoys photography.



Fall In Void

Jeremy Sanchez

Hightstown High School (grade 11)

Jeremy gets high off life. To relive a moment is beautiful, and so he takes pictures of those good moments.



Grey Day

Logan Asmar

Hightstown High School (grade 11)

Logan enjoys playing basketball in his free time and spending time with friends.

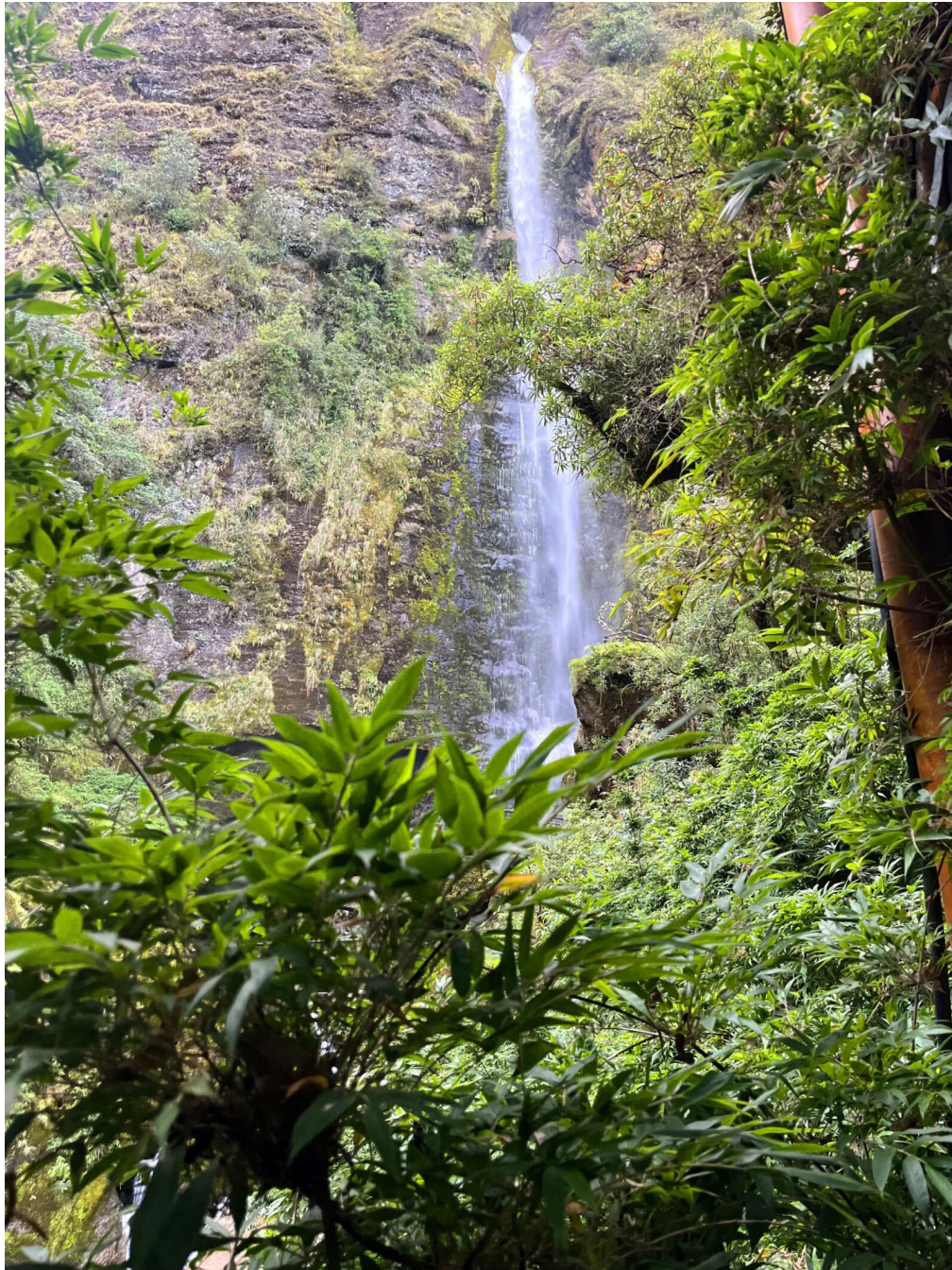


Hidden Water Fall

Matias Sanchez Velez

Hightstown High School (grade 10)

Matias Sanchez is a 10th grade student. Matias enjoys playing soccer on a daily basis. He is a very smart and hardworking student and always helps others when they need it. He enjoys traveling and spending time with family. Matias enjoys being with cousins, shopping, and thrifting whenever he can. He likes to take pictures when he has time and enjoys posting them.



I am the WATCHER

Luvens Senatus

Hightstown High School (grade 12)

Luvens Senatus is athletic, loves playing sports at Hightstown High School, soccer, track, and basketball with friends. He likes looking at different types of pictures and taking photos. After high school, he plans to go to Mercer County Community College for two years, then transfer.



I love hightstown

Wilson Quizhpi Zavala

Hightstown High School (grade 11)

Wilson Quizhpi loves taking pictures in Hightstown. Wilson enjoys spending time in the summer and playing soccer with friends on the turf. Wilson always takes pictures of the field.



Isla Morada

Hechsabel Bello Vergara

Hightstown High School (grade 12)

Hechsabel likes painting and photography. She took painting and photo imaging classes to further her knowledge and interests.



Jack O Lantern

Jennifer Lopez-Chavez

Hightstown High School (grade 12)

Jennifer Lopez has recently found a new hobby and that is taking pictures and editing them. She is a big fan of photography. With her awesome work she always gets compliments.



Last Summer

Harshal Reyaa Velat

West Windsor-Plainsboro High School South (grade 10)

Harshal is an avid reader and loves to create art. She is the assistant producer of her school's theatre and does photography as a hobby.



Little Sapling

Logan Asmar

Hightstown High School (grade 11)



Maryland

Jaylen Ricks

Hightstown High School South (grade 11)

Jaylen Ricks loves watching sports and sleeping. He also enjoys listening to music whenever he can.

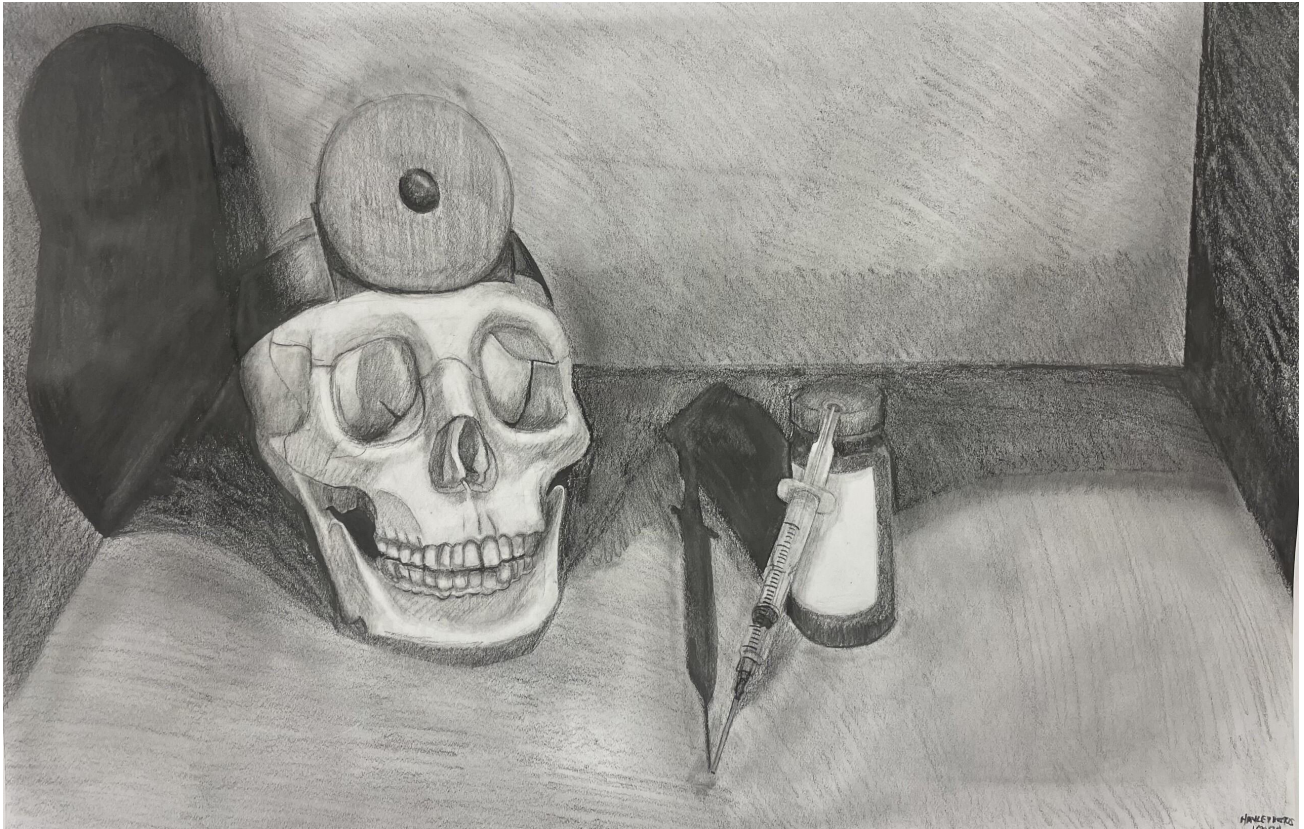


Medical Aspirations in Still Life

Hayley Bustos

Hightstown High School (grade 9)

Hayley likes to draw in her free time. She prefers sketching with pencils rather than painting.



Nature's Touch

Rahini Gubbala

Hopewell Valley Central High School (grade 11)

Rahini Gubbala enjoys spending time with her family and friends. She also likes to bake and make art by using paint, colored pencil, and many more.



New York sea

Allison Caldas Molina

Hightstown High School (grade 12)

Allison Caldas likes visiting new places. She enjoys saving memories and New York is her favorite place.



New York Streets

Jimetry Georges

Hightstown Central High School (grade 11)

Jimetry Georges likes to spend time with family and friends. He likes to go out with them and buy clothes. He also likes spending time with his dog; when he's at home he is always playing with him.



Nightlife

Dominic Tocto

Hightstown High School (grade 11)

Dominic is an 11th grade student. He loves playing soccer and listening to music in his free time. He enjoys helping out people anytime he can. Dominic looks forward to the future where he would like to take many more pictures as a side hustle.



Nightmare Still Life Project

Mahi Patel

Hightstown High School (grade 9)



Purple Flower

Christopher Hegarty
Hightstown High School (grade 11)



Quiet Bloom

Xylon Macas

Hightstown High School (grade 9)



Rainbow From A Distance

Jennifer Lopez-Chavez

Hightstown High School (grade 12)



Red Skies

Dominic Tocto

Hightstown High School (grade 11)



Sky Walk

Miguel Tafur Jimenez

Hightstown High School (grade 11)



Snowy Railways

Tiffany Guaman

Hightstown High School (grade 10)



Somewhere over the Rainbow

Mia Lawson-Diaz

Hightstown High School (grade 11)

Mia Lawson-Diaz, a student at Hightstown High School, has a passion for capturing scenic moments, especially alluring sunsets. Her phone camera is always in her hand, ready to snap the perfect sunset shot. Summer holds a special place in Mia's heart as she cherishes moments spent with her loved ones, including her family and friends. Mia finds solace knowing memories she holds close to her heart can live on in photography.



Sorrow Summer Nights

Deana Hu

West Windsor-Plainsboro High School South (grade 10)

Deana enjoys writing, reading, being with her friends, and playing sports. She is currently a senior sports editor on the staff of her high school newspaper and plays varsity soccer, varsity basketball, and varsity softball.

Sorrow Summer Nights

There is something so

sorrow

about moonlight resting a heavy hand
on an empty porch,
brushing the ashes of youth away.

A black sky humming with fireflies,
buzzing around frail trees
adorned with faded carvings,
from when we believed treetops
meant the top of the world.

The murky pool water quivers,
silently weeping in harmony
with the slight smoke above,
reminiscing our bitter and burnt 'smores
beneath disappointed stars.

Once restless, the streets now bear
the empty glow of dimmed lights and abandoned homes.
All that remains is a thousand corpses,
called memories,
that decay within each blade of emerald grass.

When the last sun rays shiver away in the sunset,
our last candle flickers again,
and again, then...
gone.

Summer came again, unchanged,
but dawned upon older faces.
We used to spring so swiftly on untamed legs,
But it's impossible to outrun the
tragedy
that reveals itself when the sun stops shining bright.

It lingers in the shadows,
it whispers in the wind,
it swirls in melted wax;
Do you feel the

sorrow

of a beautiful summer night?

Sunrise

Rahini Gubbala

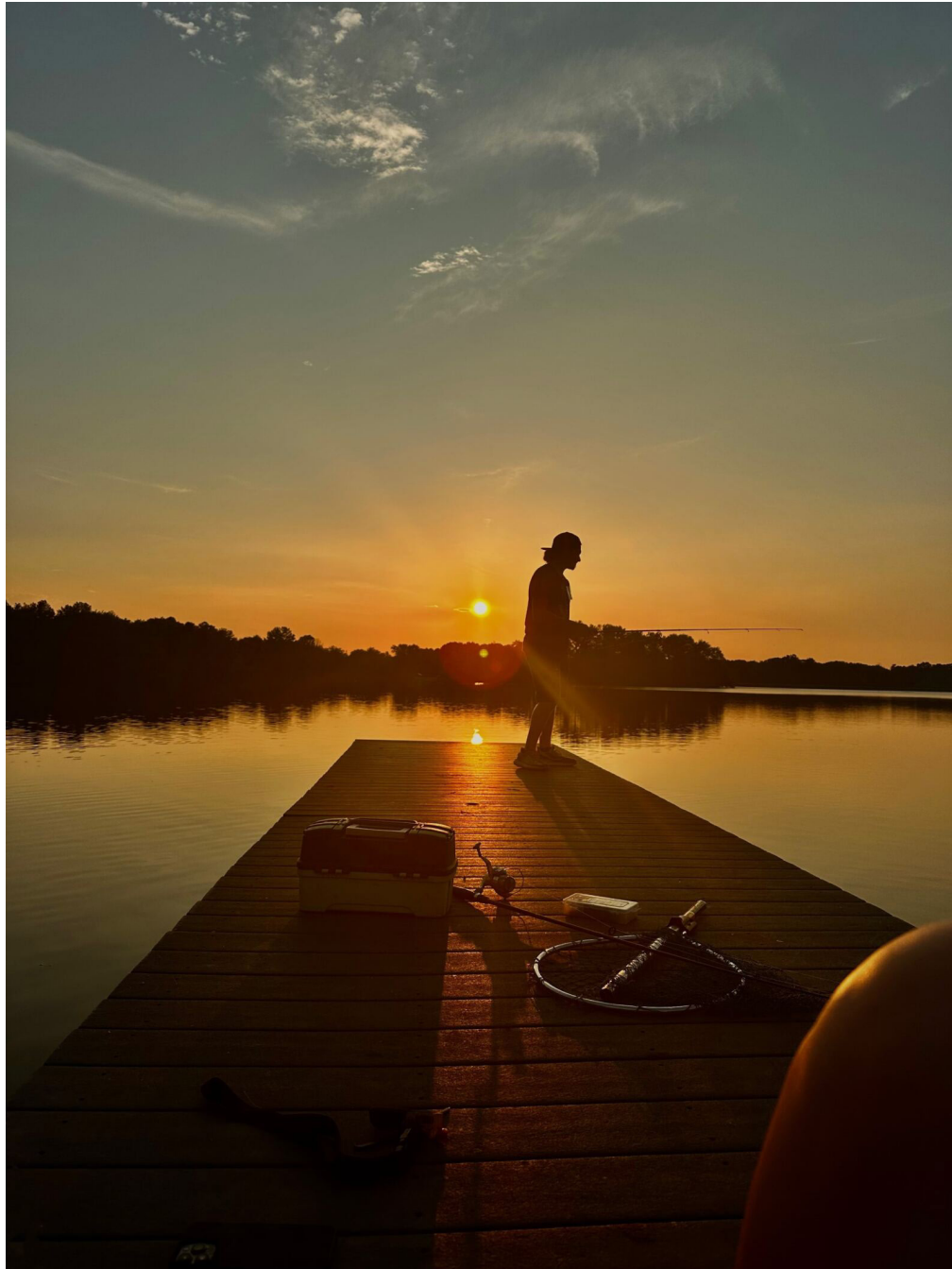
Hopewell Valley Central High School (grade 11)



Sunset at Assunpink Lake

Mia Lawson-Diaz

Hightstown High School (grade 11)



Sunset In An Apartment

Lauren Tom

Hightstown High School (grade 12)



Sunset Walk

Victor Azumatan-Tix

Hightstown High School (grade 11)

Victor Azumatan likes going out to different places and captures moments everywhere he goes.



sunshine

Jeremias Lopez Gomez

Hightstown High School (grade 11)

An image that represents peace with the details; the green background is what was left of the rain, combined with the sunlight.



Tall Buildings

Jimetry Georges

Hightstown High School (grade 11)



The Big Red Apple

Dominic Tocto

Hightstown High School (grade 11)



The City That Never Sleeps

Rahini Gubbala

Hopewell Valley Central High School (grade 11)



The Sunshine State

Jose Martinez

Hightstown High School (grade 11)

Jose Martinez likes to take pictures of the sky and landscapes. He enjoys going outdoors and exploring new places. Jose is a hardworking young man who likes to overcome any type of challenges.



Tree Trunk

Hayden Bustos

Hightstown High School (grade 10)



Tuscany Morning

Alexandra Bebawi
Hightstown High School (grade 12)



The Last Wish

Christopher Hegarty

Hightstown High School (grade 11)





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