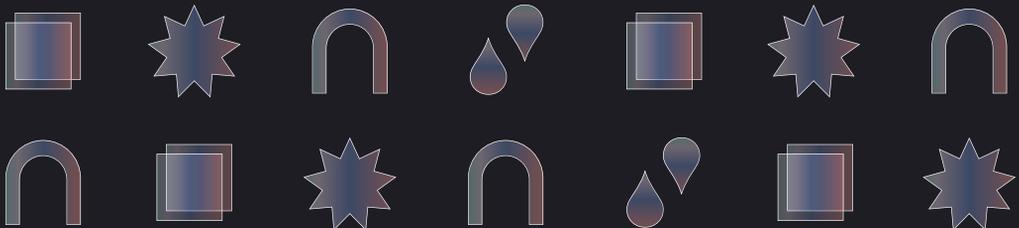


# Idiom & Image

EST. 1992

Community

2021



# Letter From the Editor

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Creativity is resilient. It weaves and adapts to the world around us, unafraid to strike when inspiration is present. During the 2020-21 academic year we learned first-hand that not only is our creativity resilient but so is our creative community. Our community exists beyond the borders of a classroom, a Zoom meeting, or even a town itself. It expands, contracts, and explores.

When we selected community as the theme for this issue, we knew that the impact of COVID-19 would still be present on campus and in the classroom. We were all required to be physically separated but we adapted to being brought together virtually. Like creativity, our community was resilient.

Students were challenged to dig deeper into the magazine's theme using the expressive art forms of visual art, photography, poetry, and prose. The curated pieces explore the relationships and connections we have with family, society, time, food, nature, and ourselves. Each work was created by Sussex County Community College students or Sussex County Teen Arts Festival students.

For the first time in this magazine's history, The National Council of Teachers of English recognized Sussex County Community College with a 2020 Award of Merit for excellence in art and literary magazines in New Jersey. It is an honor to receive this recognition, and we thank all the students and faculty who contributed.

Community is a word of paradox—it can represent inclusion and exclusion, group and self, support, unity, and more. As you read this edition of *Idiom & Image*, we challenge you to ask: what does community mean to me?

Welcome to the issue.

Anita Collins

Faculty Advisor

# Creative Community



ART



PHOTOGRAPHY



POETRY



PROSE



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Sussex County Community College  
One College Hill Road, Newton, NJ 07860  
[www.sussex.edu](http://www.sussex.edu)  
[www.sussexcountyteenarts.com](http://www.sussexcountyteenarts.com)

Faculty Advisor: Anita Collins  
Art Director & Designer: Renee Collins  
Logo Designer: Michael Xavier Markowycz

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# Hands

**Alyse Del Guadio** // Sussex County Community College

Hands are visual representations of a persons life. The hand on the bottom right shows a child's hand, untouched by the hardships of life. The hand on the top left shows an adults hand, rough from having to physically work hard to get through life.

# Untitled

Jordan Wolfanger // Lenape Valley RHS // Teen Arts

Ten fingers, five attached to each palm. At the end of each of these fingers, extended long, decorative nails. My mother took pride in painting her nails every two weeks, changing up the color and adding designs embellished with gemstones of varying sizes. Her hands were always decorated, her left hand adorned a ring, a band of shiny gold with a diamond welded into the center, representing the love my mother and father share for one another. Her hands were soft, and had a soothing quality to the touch, from all the times she cradled me and my siblings as infants. However, the memory of her previous years as a bank teller haunted her right hand, her arthritis reminded her of the countless times she had to count the money in her teller drawer by hand at the end of her shift.

Looking down at my own hands, they share a similar composition. I too have five fingers that branch off the base of my palms, with painted nails at the end of each. However, my nails are not as flashy, usually only displaying a single color of paint. I was feeling saucy I chose a color with sparkles mixed in, but for the most part I kept my nails plain. I didn't want to draw the same attention to my hands, for they did not share the same elegance of my mother's. My left hand was bare, but my right had a ridge forming on my middle finger from holding my pencil while sketching. My palms were peeling, fallen victim to winter's harsh conditions. No lotion could soften the perimeter of dead, pale skin that climbed up each finger. I was cold to the touch, and my hands had a purple hue to them, as if they were decaying off my wrists. When pressure was applied to them, a white ghost appeared on the pressure point, and then faded back into purple flesh. All typical symptoms of a condition called Raynaud's Phenomenon, which I happen to have.

My hands first started turning blue sophomore year of high school. As my sister and I walked to her car after the last bell had rung, my bare hands were met with the frigid February air. After taking refuge in my sister's car, I had looked down at my hands, as I intended to use them to plug in my phone to play music. My hands were frozen in place and were a greyish blue hue. I was horrified, and my sister took a picture, as if I was some tourist attraction.

Come see the freak with blue hands.

I had always been a cold person. It could be 75 degrees outside but I would still be seen wearing warm layers. I would always get random chills tingling down my spine, and my hands were always cold. After speaking to a Doctor, she diagnosed me with Raynaud's.

It was not a serious condition, it was caused by poor circulation to my hands and feet, and essentially was the reason my hands turned almost every color in the rainbow.

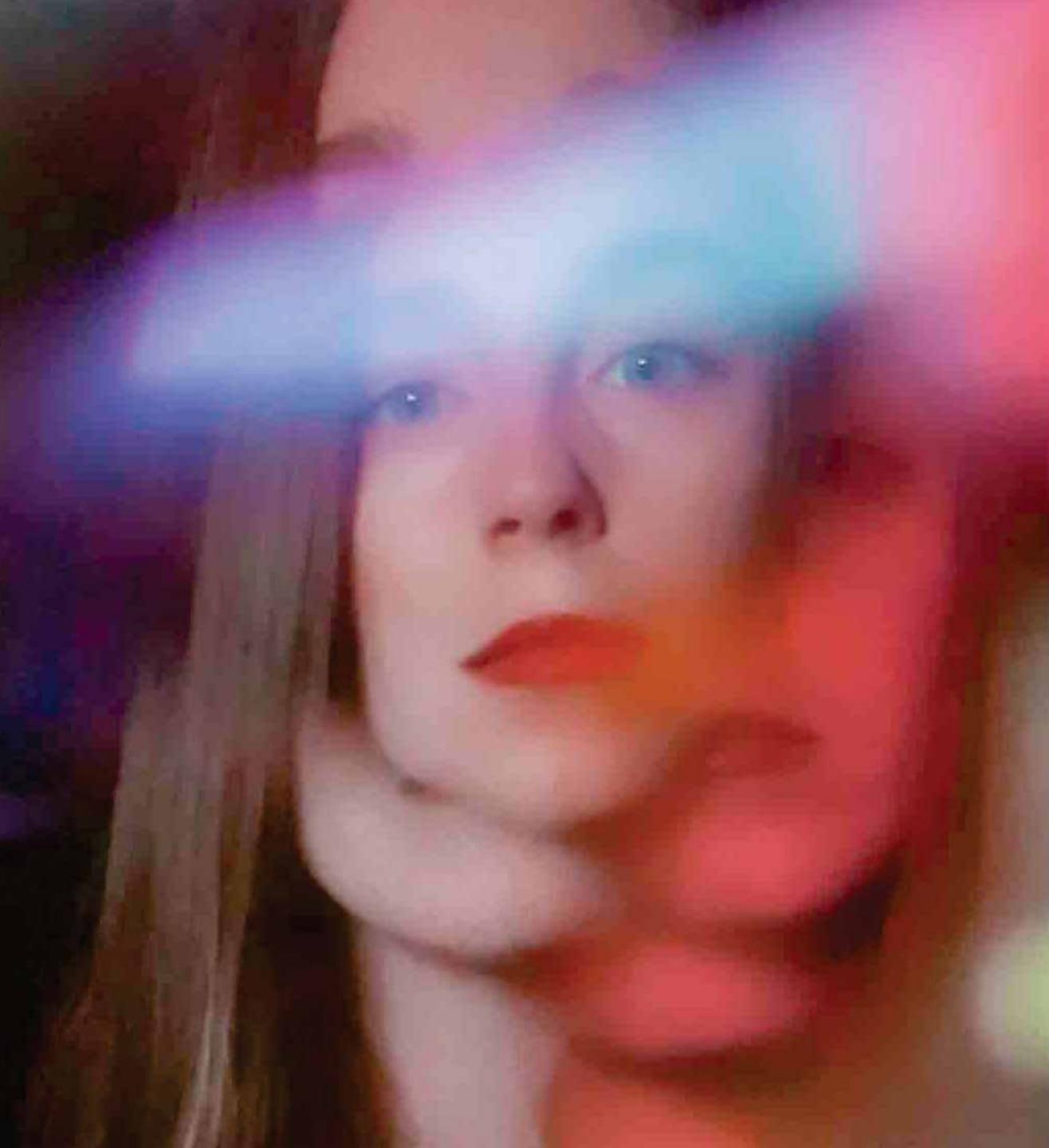
While it is not serious, I am reminded of this condition every day. I dreaded getting out of my warm cocoon of blankets in the morning, as I have the coldest room in the entire house, ironically. Layers were my best friend, and so were space heaters. My mother always found me on my floor sitting pressed against my heater, grasping onto the warm air it pumped out the metal grate. For Christmas last year, I was given heated gloves and they were revolutionary. The thing that bothers me the most is when I touched someone else, they flinched almost immediately, probably in shock by the icy fingers grazing against their warm and normal skin. They would draw their bodies backward, creating space between me and them. This reaction is usually followed by "Wow your hands are freezing!" Once knowing this, they didn't want me to touch them. They did not want to share their warmth, and they did not want my coldness.

Touch is a connection, and it is a comfort. I wished I had a comforting touch like my mother, like her hands. I began to detest my own hands, I viewed them as broken and ugly. Dry rashes laced my hands and the left patterns of little red bumps all over them. The texture of my skin became crackled like a desert landscape during its driest season. One night I coated them in Vaseline and slept with socks on them, to alleviate the irritation of the rash and dryness.

I felt this way towards my hands until one day I was sketching and began to reflect about all the things that my hands did for me. They completed simple tasks such as they brushed my teeth, tied my shoelaces, and allowed me to open doors. They helped me take my ideas from my mind and translate them onto paper through my artwork. They are even typing these very words. Perhaps I was being too hard on them and should be more grateful. The coldness of my hands did not have to represent what I was on the inside, and I shouldn't be ashamed of my cold embrace. My mother would always tell me:

"Cold hands, warm heart."

And I learned to believe her.



## Self Portrait

**Alyse Del Guadio** // Sussex County Community College

Self portraits have become a creative outlet for many. Today, people are connected through sharing photos of themselves. These photos give people a glimpse at how a person sees themselves through an artistic process.



## The Housewife

Rachel Young //  
Sparta HS // Teen Arts



## Masked

Karlie McCinnis //  
Wallkill Valley RHS // Teen Arts

# My Journal

**Alexa Petrie**

Lenape Valley RHS // Teen Arts

There is a blue-black notebook with seven shining stars on its cover. Contained within its pages are my creativity, my journey, my sanity.

I lift the cover and gently trace my name, inked with black pen on the first page: swirls and loops and curves. I turn the page.

Shapes and colors peer back at me, pink and blue beaches, orange koi, and scarlet airplanes float across the pages. I slip my finger beneath the paper, lifting it to the light. I turn the page.

Letters spill across the surface, months and dates and notes and quotes and deadlines. April, July, September, each with its own palette of shades and photographs and fonts. I turn the page.

I gaze at the flat, white abyss, speckled with a repeating pattern of evenly spaced gray dots. This is the spot I am looking for, a page as fresh and smooth as new-fallen snow, not yet marked by the footprints of travelers and other creatures. I breathe in, feeling the air guide itself to each lobe of my lungs. I begin.

I start with pencil, always, tracing the outlines of words and rectangles, spaces to write and spaces to color and spaces to glue. I cut crisp rectangles out of newly printed pictures and carefully slice around the edges of the unsuspecting subjects of some of the images. I rip shreds of newspaper, creating rough edges that contrast with the perfectly straight lines of the original. I cut squares out of Pantone paint chips with names like Serenity, Outer Space, Orange Pweel, and circles from brightly hued paper sheets. I match markers to these scraps of paper, scribbling, intent on discovering the perfect shade to complement my collection. I write out letters, watching them flow from the tip of my marker, smooth lines that can eventually be recognized as legible words. These I cut out too, guiding my scissors around the curves and edges of every letter.

I arrange these scraps across the page, an amalgamation of pieces, united by their place in my notebook. I gently coat the back of each paper with a thin layer of glue, making sure to reach all the way to the edges. I press each fragment into place according to the plan of my original pencil sketch. The final spread begins to form, a web of shapes, combining to reveal its true purpose: a calendar. There is a spot for every day of the month, surrounded by decoration and inspiration. Into these squares, I inscribe everything I must not forget in the coming month.



This page is a map, its lines and symbols guiding me through my life. Instead of traversing stormy seas and adventuring through treacherous mountain passes, I navigate the often-confusing land of Biology notes and Calculus tests and daily YMCA trips. When the world becomes an overwhelming tsunami of due dates and swim meets, I return to the quiet space within my journal. When everything feels like too much, I take a deep breath and open the soft textured cover and write down exactly what it is that must be completed. In black and white, my to-do list is never as long as it feels in my head, where all the assignments and tasks spiral into a tornado, overpowering my thoughts. Armed with my trusted pen and dedicated notebook, I funnel the tornado into a more manageable plan of action. I glue myself back together by turning a mess of patterns into a collage of creativity.

My journal allows me to make sense of the world and see how far I have come with the memories contained in its pages. With this notebook, I am grounded. I can exist within the chaos, and be okay with the mess outside, because I have the ability to order the world with strips of paper.



# Oh Dear Brother

Adam Sterling // Sussex County Community College

They said you were a monster  
In the next room  
I believed the lies  
Like they were  
Un forsaken truths  
Oh dear brother  
You're no monster  
You're just you  
An alien to these people  
They can't understand you  
Oh dear brother  
Don't they know you hurt too  
That you bleed as well  
That when you cut it's red  
Not blue  
Oh dear Brother  
Let me tell you the truth  
There was never a monster in that room  
There was never one single scary thing  
About you  
Oh dear brother  
You're my brother  
You're my friend in this empty room  
A guiding light out of this tomb  
Oh dear brother there's no monster in you  
Just two shades  
The sun and the moon  
OH DEAR BROTHER



# Peonies

Sienna Klotz // Sussex County Community College

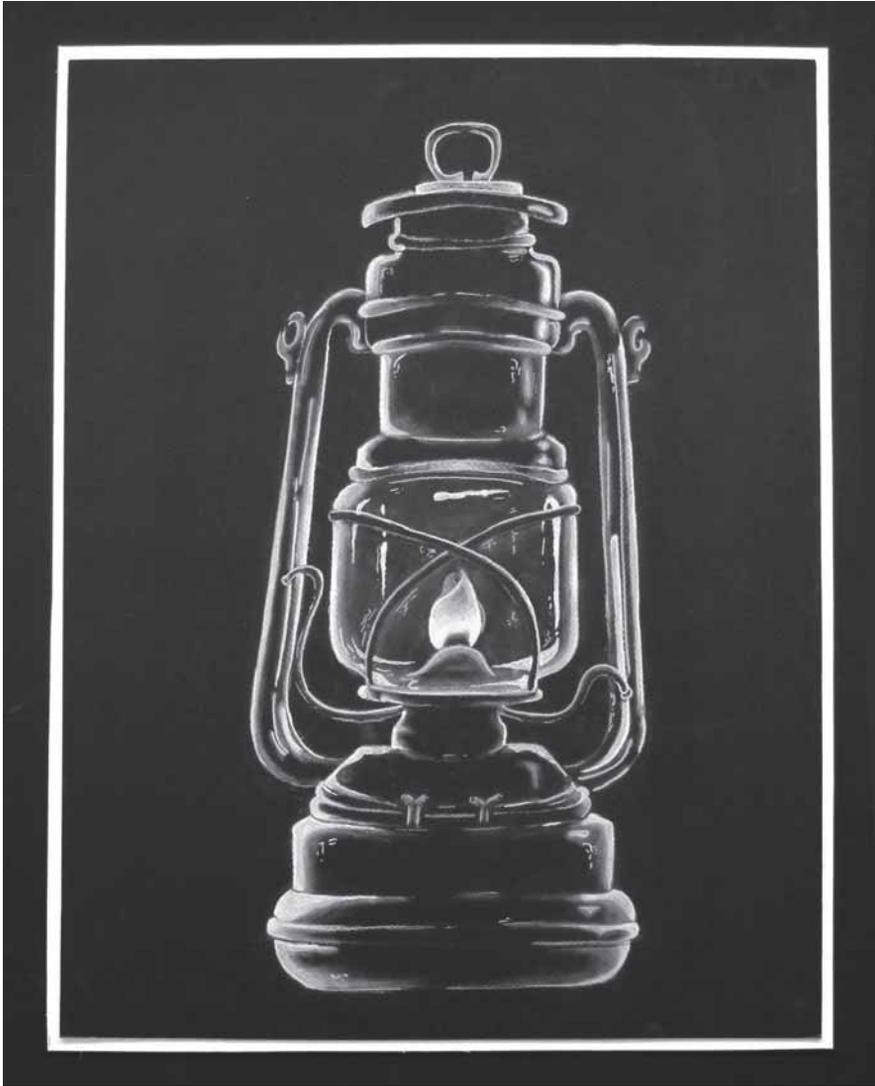
"Peonies" is a full color still life inspired by the fragile complexity of petals.





# The Lies We Tell Ourselves

Taige Kellenberger // Sparta HS // Teen Arts



## Tiny Flame

Danielle Kelly // Pope John XXIII HS // Teen Arts



 Mount Tammany



Nicole Prior // Sussex County Community College



# What's He Waiting For?

Brian Dome // Hopatcong HS // Teen Arts



# In the Snow

Georgia Wheeler // Wallkill Valley RHS Name // Teen Arts



# an Orange for you

Liv Worthington // High Point RHS // Teen Arts

as a lover of stars, i am compelled  
to make my life poetic.  
constellations smile down;  
i catch them on paper.  
too often, when i try to say  
that smile, that emotion  
with its own tone,  
i speak it without meaning  
or feel it without words.

at nine, that feeling  
was gooey and shiny  
like mom's ring  
and meant only crossing parking lots,  
paper valentine pots,  
hiding candy and not getting caught.

memory keeps those reminders-  
plus notes  
of coffee, conditioner,  
fried county fairs.  
i added snapshots of safety,  
because falling  
under lets me be soft  
instead of only strong.

Love  
means looking forward.  
it means  
sharing, living.

these are my words, my yellow  
my sunrise my purple my promises  
my rings my rooks my firewood  
my first hot chocolate of november  
my splashing citrus weather  
slowly warm evenings of june  
the days we watch the moon-

We are crescents of this cavernous sky,  
beaming at these bits of universe  
we call each other.



## The Fruits of Our Labor

**Zoe Butler //**  
Sussex County  
Community College

My professor, Janet  
Cunniffe-Chieffo, helped me  
to arrange this oil on canvas  
still-life. Food is a major part  
of community and brings us  
together.



## imprimatura brass

**Nicole Prior //**  
Sussex County  
Community College

# The Half-Life of Sam Clinton



**J.C. Clinton**

Sussex County Community College

Sam was five when we met. A bushel of white curls with piercing black eyes peered out at me from the caged crate. Little did I know, in four short years, Sam Clinton would change my understanding of life, death, and love—forever.

I was reluctant to take him in. Sam had belonged to the father of a friend who, upon retiring, was no longer up to the task of being a pet parent. If a fully accomplished man wasn't willing to take on such responsibility, who was I? Yet, I agreed, and Sam was shipped from Arizona and into our lives; and, no, it wasn't love at first sight.

Sam was quick to make himself at home. He secured his spot on the couch-- not on the cushion like a normal dog, but along the back as a cat would. He took up a third of the bed at night, despite weighing only fourteen pounds. He also hated any weather that wasn't hot and arid, refusing to go outside if there was a hint of grey in the skies. Once, I beckoned him from the door to go for his evening walk. He stared, jumped off the couch and trotted to his bed, his black eyes following me as if to say "I dare you to try."

In addition to declaring himself master of the house, he also earned the title "bully of the block", thanks to his habit of intimidating poodles and rottweilers alike. His hostilities ended with other dogs though. Sam loved people. There was not a lap that passed through our house that he didn't weasel his way into. Neighbors would purposely drive the long way around to see him sleeping in the bay window. I could see why, despite all his attitude, Sam was cute.

But I still wasn't taken with him. Looking back, I can see the wall that had been erected between me and the world, one that had been in place for so long that I thought it normal to feel nothing. Perhaps some divine source sent Sam to teach me, or maybe he simply sensed my reluctance to love him and would have none of it. Either way, there was no escaping Sam's affection. He memorized my work schedule and the sound of my car, priming his spy body to jump on me the moment I entered the house. He waited outside of locked rooms. He crafted the perfect squeal, just high pitched enough to make you cave and give him whatever he wanted (which was usually your lap).

It was less than a year into his new life that we noticed the first signs of what would eventually be his defining battle. We chalked it up to a "funny tummy," and his habit of grazing the floors like a vacuum cleaner. In a matter of months, however, the truth would change our lives. For whatever reason, Sam's liver wasn't working. Multiple tests and multiple credit cards later, we still had no answers as to why. A strict diet and medications became the norm, along with what we dubbed "attacks," in which his entire digestive system would betray him. Yet, Sam would ride through those battles and come out the other end ready to take on the world.

Sam's illness only exacerbated his stubbornness. He would go on hunger strikes because he hated the prescription food. I became a veterinary chef, mixing everything from baby food to cottage cheese in an effort to entice his appetite. When that didn't work, we resorted to feeding him by hand-- once for six months straight. Like any human on a diet, he snuck what he wasn't supposed to have. Once, I came home to find he had removed a pack of white chocolate Reese's peanut butter cups from a perch in the kitchen (I still haven't figured out how) and meticulously unwrapped the plastic to reach the goods inside.

As Sam declined, we learned to adapt, but not always perfectly. He wore diapers so he wouldn't have to go out outside. We cut oversized socks into sweaters since his weight-loss made him less tolerant to the cold. Eventually, much to our dismay, we had to restrict his access to sections of the house, for fear that his diminished coordination would result in injury. Of course, never one to be left out, he repeatedly risked harm by attempting to scale the partitions or chew through them. He became more aggressive too. One time he bit my hand for snatching a tissue from his mouth as he was trying to eat it. I yelled at him, and the look of sadness, regret, and confusion in his eyes still haunts me.

Sam's health ebbed and flowed. One night, my husband and I were convinced, "This was it." We placed his bed at the foot of ours and rested our hands close to him so that he had our scent. At some point in the middle of the night, Sam waddled into the living room and released the entire contents of his bowels, bringing him back to life. After that, it became a running gag. Anytime he was ill, we'd say, "Just one big poop Sam and you'll feel fine."

In late April of 2020, with my husband recovering from COVID, we went on our first walk as a family in what felt like forever. Both Sam and my husband struggled with the trip, but they made the effort, and were happier for it. At one point, Sam's tired little body could no longer sustain the pace of even a stroll. I picked him up and carried him the rest of the way home. My husband had to walk.

Sam passed in the early hours of Mother's Day 2020. It wasn't a surprise. The previous morning, it was as if a circuit had blown inside of him, and his body began to shut down piece by piece. He had spent the majority of his final day resting on my chest, his eyes gazing in and out of this world. When the time came, he was met on all sides by his family-- me, my husband, our youngest cat Calliope, and even our oldest cat Ronan, whose temperament can only be described as that of a small African dictator.

I had never felt grief like I did the moment Sam left me. I hesitate to even describe it because I'm not sure the right words exist to do it justice. The most I can say is picture being pushed violently off a cliff. The wind cuts at your skin. The pain is bad, but the fear is unbearable. Anger turns into rage which turns you into someone unrecognizable. But that's okay, because at any moment you'll hit the ground and all of it will be over. Only the ground never comes. In fact, you watch it move out of reach over and over and over again, until you pass out from the stress. In those brief moments, nothing exists, not even the pain. When you come to, the cycle starts anew. Eventually, you reach the ground, but instead of slamming into it you land without even noticing. Your skin is covered with these nasty little scars, the kind that open at the mention of his name, or at the glimpse of a picture you forget you had on your phone. And somehow, despite the pain, you can't help but pick at those scars.

I learned three lessons from the half-life of Sam Clinton. One, love is unconditional. Sam and I never really saw eye to eye. And, if I'm being honest, I often felt burdened by him—not by the illness, but rather the impossibility of what we faced. It wasn't until I was standing in the vacuum that Sam left behind that I realized how much of my life I had given to him, and how much more I was willing to give—even for one more day. Two, love is incomplete without loss. You don't know how much a life means to you until it's gone. There are so many things I wish I had done differently, but big pictures never come into focus until you are further away.

Finally, there is a quote I heard years ago on an episode of Oprah's SuperSoul Conversations with businesswoman Sheryl Sandberg. She said, "Death does not end a relationship, and death does not end love" (Sandberg). I didn't understand those words at the time. I can't forget them now.

At the height of his life, I took Sam to meet my mother. After introductions, my mother turned to go upstairs to rustle up something to eat. She asked Sam if he wanted to join her. He stopped at the bottom of the stairs and looked back at me. I smiled and said, "Go on." Sam turned and trotted up the stairs.



# Corneal Colors

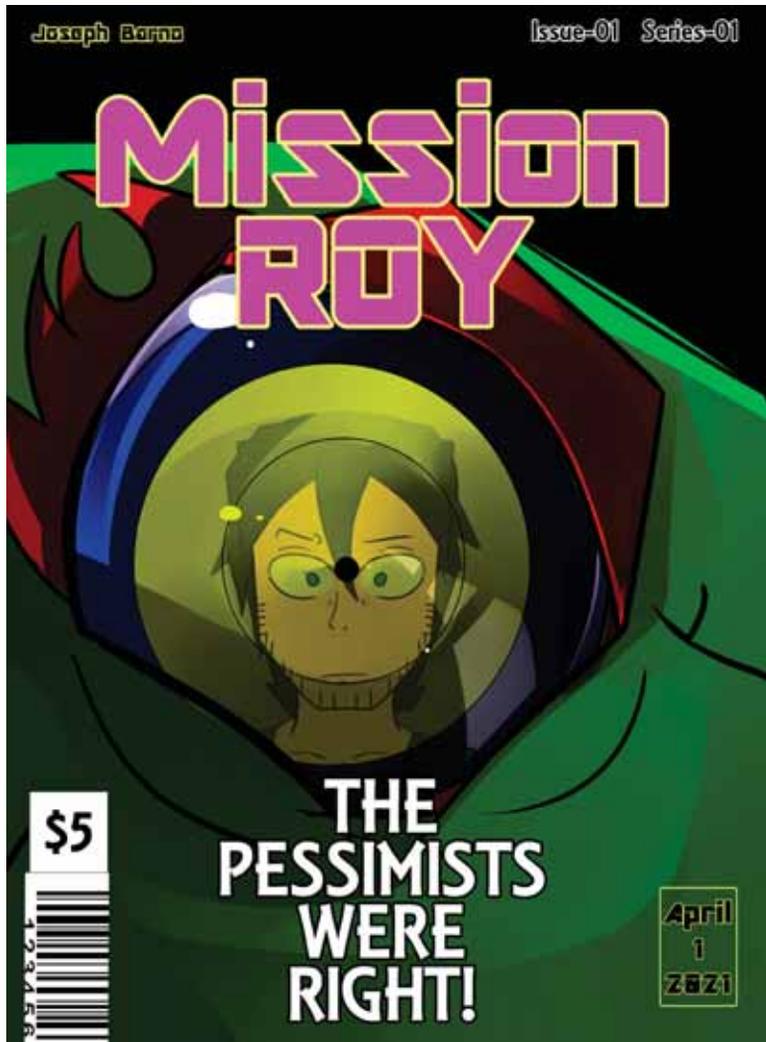
**Nicole Prior** // Sussex County  
Community College

My inspiration comes from color, life and my imagination. Whether it be vibrant or dull, the use of color is an important factor in my work. I strive to set the mood through my use of color.

# I Am From

**Madeline Lupi** // Wallkill Valley RHS // Teen Arts

I am from microchips and car keys  
From Barbies and Colgate toothpaste  
I am from the warped wooded house at the apex of a lonely hill  
Nostalgic, temperamental, dizzy like the stairs that divide us: boy from girl and husband from wife  
I am from the stifling skylight and forget-me-nots  
Only visible when consumed with darkness and adorned with a five-peddled, blue disposition  
I am from late movie nights and the hot and cold banter of a mother and father  
From Debbie and Victor  
I'm from the incessant, anxious studying and the car radio pouring out our minds  
From "I know you'll be a heartbreaker when you get older" and "never get married"  
I'm from realism, the poetic justice of our limited longevity  
I'm from New Jersey and Italy and Ukraine and France  
Morning pancakes and evening fried vegetables with jasmine rice  
From the life-changing moments, like when my father began writing again the intense ideology of words in all things: mathematics and science and love.  
The self-sacrifice of Abby, who lost and lost and won again.  
I am from all these things which are now conglomerations of colors collected into photographs  
Locked away in the attic to gaze upon lovingly and frantically before life gets in the way again  
Where I am from is not a place or a person, I am only from those experiences which buried me alive,  
and those experiences which uncovered parts of me I never knew.



## Mission Roy

Joseph Barno // Sussex County Community College

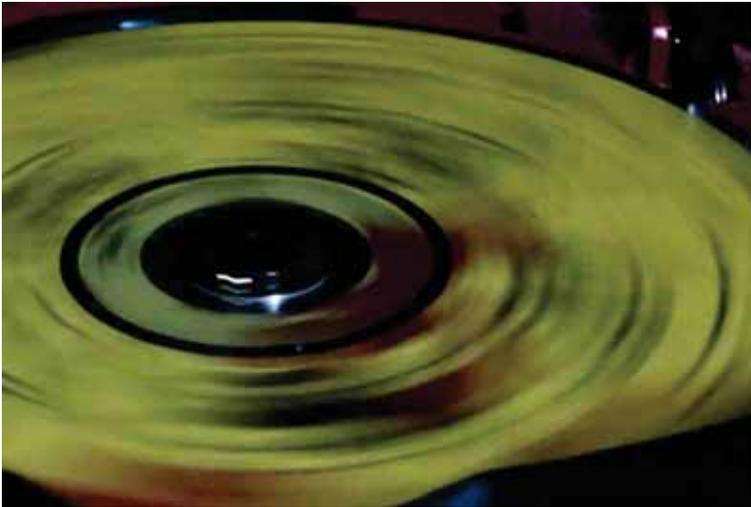
Drawing helps force my brain to stay in the moment, and takes my mind off of stressful events in the future. Illustrating my own world helps bring me to a calmer state of mind.



## Finding Light

Zachary Pastor Poe // Wallkill Valley RHS Name // Teen Arts

This comic book cover marks the first in an anthology series about reaching out and accepting help when dealing with the various troubles in life, both internal and external.



## Spin

Hailey Orecchio //  
Newton HS // Teen Arts



## Realizing My Disparity

Kelly DeFinis //  
Wallkill Vallery RHS //  
Teen Arts



## Statue of Liberty

Alyse Del Guadio //  
Sussex County Community College

The Statue of Liberty is a symbol of hope and freedom in a diverse community pieced together through art and culture. It is a representation of starting a new, better life in a community that celebrates differences.



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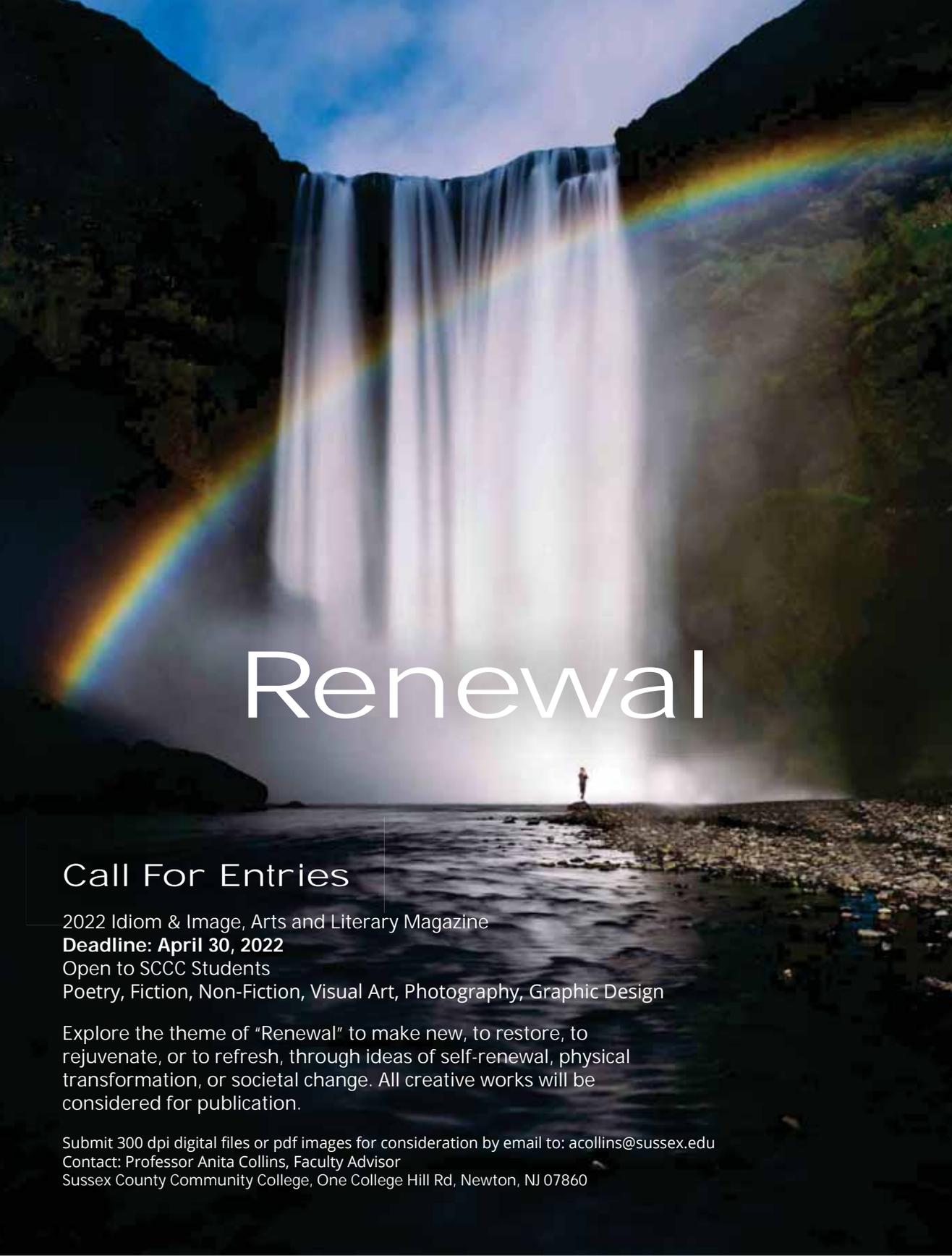
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# Renewal

## Call For Entries

2022 Idiom & Image, Arts and Literary Magazine

**Deadline: April 30, 2022**

Open to SCCC Students

Poetry, Fiction, Non-Fiction, Visual Art, Photography, Graphic Design

Explore the theme of "Renewal" to make new, to restore, to rejuvenate, or to refresh, through ideas of self-renewal, physical transformation, or societal change. All creative works will be considered for publication.

Submit 300 dpi digital files or pdf images for consideration by email to: [acollins@sussex.edu](mailto:acollins@sussex.edu)

Contact: Professor Anita Collins, Faculty Advisor

Sussex County Community College, One College Hill Rd, Newton, NJ 07860