THE LEXINGTON SCHOOL
NEWSLETTER
TLS
May 1989

Sixth Graders Take To The Great Outdoors

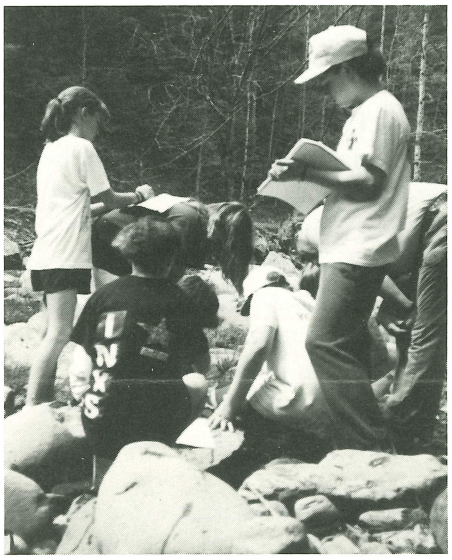
I admit that it was only after much thought and with some reluctance that I accepted the invitation to accompany the 6th grade to Tremont. I just didn't know what to expect. The only condition from teacher Tom Brown was that I play nurse if I accepted the challenge. While raising three children had sharpened my nursing skills, I was apprehensive about serving in that capacity for 30 students.

Our purpose in going, I quickly found out, was to explore the Great Smoky Mountains with the help of experienced naturalists from the region. Tremont is beautifully nestled in Walker's Valley in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The staff does a fine job sharing their enthusiasm for the natural world with children by challenging their curiosity and energies. The area is rich in southern Appalachian culture. There are extensive trail systems and varied natural environments which provide outdoor classrooms where participants can experience and learn about the delicate balances in nature and man's past, present and future impact upon that balance. Hiking to the mountaintops, exploring streams, searching for animals, storytelling, singing, and group problem-solving games made each child's experience not only enjoyable, but also unforgettable.

For those for whom this was the first time away from home, I cannot think of a better place to be.



Jennifer Smith, Danny Van Clief, Paul Thorpe, and Elizabeth Kenan are taking a walk together.



Making observations and recording findings in a journal were daily requirements at Tremont.

They were with close friends in a beautiful setting away from the cares of the city, TV, curling irons, and soft drinks. The atmosphere was so different that, in a way, this was a "first time" for almost everybody.

Our meal ticket each day was a piece of trash which we had to find on the grounds. This is not an easy thing to come by at Tremont. One of the first lessons we learned was about food waste. It was measured every day when we scraped our plates. From two pounds, four ounces of waste our first day, we improved to only five ounces of

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From The Headmaster:



by
David Lowry

Jon Beck Shank taught me English in the 9th, 11th, and 12th grades. I loved him. He was a wonderful teacher. I looked forward to each class; I was excited as I left. He taught me how to write and taught me that writing teaches a person to think. He gave me only one "A" in all those semesters. After four years of college and four years of graduate school, I finally "got around" to writing him a letter to tell him how powerful he had been and how much I was in his debt. The letter was returned: "Deceased."

As we end the 1988-89 academic year, let me suggest that you write a note to some special teacher to say "thank you." It will mean more than you will ever know. ■

Sixth Graders

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food wasted the last day. That's quite an accomplishment for 30 picky eaters!

Dorm inspection was amusing because the winner each day received the "platinum dust pan award." Neatness in these inspections was not as important as turning off lights and making sure the faucet in the sink wasn't dripping. Learning to conserve resources in this manner was a lesson we could all take home with us.

I asked several children what they liked best about our trip and the number one answer was the all-day hike. Mrs. Owen, Mr. Hardesty, and a Tremont guide took 15 students one day and the other 15 the next day on an eight mile trek. The group left early after breakfast with a sack lunch and rain gear. The trail up the mountain was followed by a different trail down which ended at a waterfall. They could choose to explore at the end or just sit and absorb their surroundings. Their enjoyment of the experience and the huge sense of accomplishment were incredible.

Another memorable adventure was a night hike by the light of the moon. The hikers observed deer, raccoons, and other animals by eavesdropping on their natural habitat. To experience the hush of the wilderness was a gift for all of us.



Sallie Talbott read from a very old schoolbook for Miss Elsie.

We never sited a black bear, but the slide show the staff had put together was the next best thing. A graduate student from the University of Tennessee taught us about tracking bears using radio transmitters and while we were there he located a female bear.

During their participation in games and a play, the children learned about cooperation and preservation. The message was that it is never too late to start caring about and preserving our world, and that if we work together anything can be accomplished. From a parent's perspective, it was interesting to see how each classmate interacted within his or her group of eight students. Some groups had definite leaders and some could resolve their problems with no leader at all.

We had a lesson that covered anthropology, history, and social studies when we visited the 103-year-old Little Greenbrier Schoolhouse. Miss Elsie, age 84, was ringing the school bell waiting for our arrival. We entered and took our seats, boys on the right and girls on the left, just like the children of the pioneers would have done. Miss Elsie was quite a schoolmistress. No one's attention wavered for a minute. Her presentation ended with a spelling lesson prepared from *Webster's Blueback Speller* and an old-fashioned spelling bee which everyone thoroughly enjoyed. We had to cross two creeks balancing on logs to get back to Tremont. This is when "B" (the name by which teacher Tom Brown is affectionately addressed by his students) slipped and got all wet.

I can't say enough about the value of the 6th grade's trip to Tremont. Each child was asked what the week meant to him, and each one had something positive to say. For me, it was a wonderful experience. I was thrilled with the opportunity to share in the children's adventure.

Next year's trip to Tremont is scheduled for October. There are positions available for two or three parents to accompany the group. Margaret Wharton, the author of this article, obviously couldn't recommend the job more highly. ■

Hooray for the Red, White & Blue

It didn't take much imagination to feel like you were in Washington, D.C. standing in front of the Capitol. It could have been Inauguration Day or the 4th of July, but it was actually March 24. The place was The Lexington School theater and the occasion was a "Star Spangled Salute" from the 5th and 6th grades. This year's musical was a delightful potpourri of patriotism, seriousness, humor, and inspiration.

The set for a "Star Spangled Salute" was modeled on the backdrop used for President Bush's inauguration. A picture from *Newsweek* was photocopied, enlarged, made into a transparency, put in an overhead, and projected onto the stage. Don Noderer turned the image into reality with one-inch Styrofoam insulation board and tempera paint.

Dressed in matching red, white, and blue costumes, the stars arrived on stage in a parade that began at the library. "As the caissons go rolling along" was the instrumental refrain for their spirited march down the hall which was led by Lady Liberty herself.

The program opened with "America Sings," a new piece of music written for the National Choral Event which was held in Washington on April 29. Middle School Music Director Eunice Noderer selected the piece because of its appropriateness for a "Star Spangled Salute" and because of its significance for her students. The song is "dedicated to kids who feel they have no hope, from kids with hope to share." All proceeds from the sale of the sheet music and the audio tape are going to an already established organization to help find a place, a family, a life for homeless children. Mrs. Noderer said that her singers and dancers felt very proud that their program contributed in some small way to this larger effort.



Flags are raised in a display of patriotism.

It would be hard to say just what the audience favorite was in a "Star Spangled Salute." Every piece in the show had its own special appeal. The patriots sang the names of the 50 states in rhyming alphabetical order to the tune of "Turkey in the Straw." If that weren't impressive enough, they sang it again in doubletime! They performed a medley of Americana which included "Yankee Doodle," "Dixie," "Skip to My Lou," and the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." There was a clogger, and a Cossack dancer, and everyone had the opportunity to "boogey down" in "America Sings."

Every child had the opportunity be a soloist this year. Those who wanted to could come to the microphone during the transition between songs to tell their audience what "America is...." Sixth grader Jason Whitlow explained that "America is: speaking French, making Japanese origami, eating Mexican food, listening to your Sony, riding around in a BMW, and still being considered an all-American kid."

Is it any wonder that the middle school musical is always standing room only? ■

Curtains Up!

The Best Years? is not a title which a drama coach could locate in a search for a play suited for performance by teenagers. That's because Donna Adams put it together for her 8th grade students. The clue to what this production was about is revealed in the title's punctuation. *The Best Years?* was a collection of monologues about growing up.

The setting for the 21 vignettes was an all-in-one park, bedroom,

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Curtains Up

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family room. Beg, borrow, or steal was the mentality behind its construction. The performers had a particularly good time decorating the bedroom section. They brought in all kinds of paraphernalia from their own rooms so that it would be authentic.

Most of the monologues were as light-hearted as their titles would suggest: "Too Young for This; Too Old for That;" "All Mothers are Clairvoyant;" "She Hit Me First;" and "My Mother Collects China Cows." Other selections were in a more serious vein, dealing with such topics as child abuse, a grandparent entering a nursing home, and the end of the world.



Photo by Chad Massie '89

Donna Adams backstage with Chris Young and Ryan Massie.

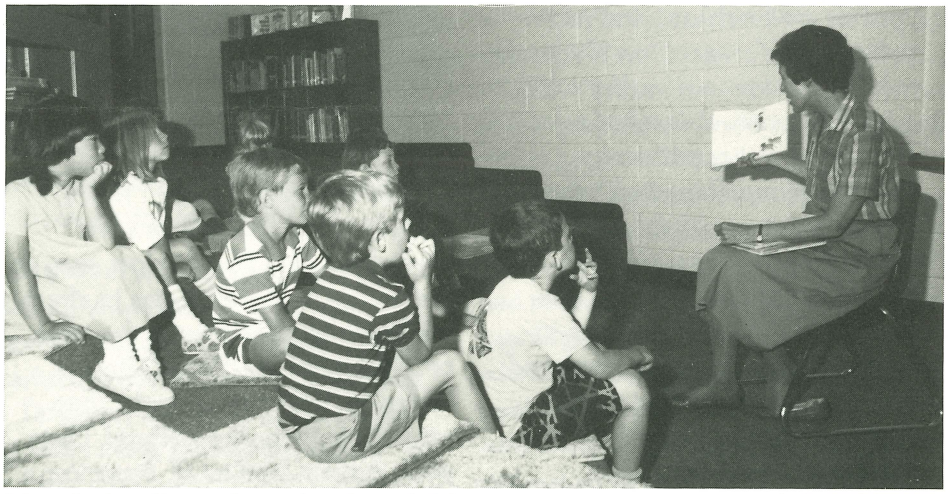
The actors and actresses in *The Best Years?* auditioned for their parts "cold turkey." This means that no one practiced the reading in advance. Mrs. Adams chose who did what on the basis of her perception of who could make the monologue work. She says that some students seemed to fill roles written just for them. Other characters were quite different from the way she perceives their real life counterparts. Regardless of the "fit," every performer experienced some of the self-discovery that is one of drama's greatest gifts. ■

Advanced Booking

by TLS Librarian Sandy Ireland

Many of us base our perceptions and expectations of school libraries on our own early experiences. If those school days were before the early 1970's, we are very likely to remember the library on the periphery of the educational process, often operating in isolation and rarely in the mainstream of school activity.

During the past two decades, as libraries in general have become more "user friendly," American educators have come to view the school library as an integral supporting component of the school's educational program, expecting the library program and services to actively reinforce the curriculum and philosophy of the school. Certainly basic library operations, such as materials selection and processing, reference/resource to students and teachers, reading promotion, and general library management are standard for all libraries. Nevertheless, individual programs and services vary according to many factors: most importantly, the overall atmosphere of the school; the needs and interests of students and faculty; physical setting and arrangement of the space; scheduling; and, of course, the budget. Variables within a school from one year to the next often affect the library significantly, and today's libraries are expected to respond accordingly.



Mrs. Ireland's reading aloud to children is an important part of their library curriculum.

As part of the fine arts wing which was completed in November 1986, The Lexington School's new library was designed to allow freer access and improved services to a larger number of students during the school day. In addition to more storage space, a work room, and a separate story/instruction section, the main area of the library was designed to provide an aesthetically pleasing environment

The Lexington School admits students of any race, religion, color, sex, national or ethnic origin.

for study, reading, research, or browsing. The architects also wanted to give students a panoramic view of the southwest corner of the school grounds — surely a fine vantage point from which to contemplate the wonders of nature or any unusual action on the playground, as the case may be!

With a long-standing school tradition of love of books and reading, TLS's library has an ideal foundation upon which to build a dynamic program. Indeed, a major emphasis during scheduled library periods, which are once every six-day cycle for preschool through 6th grade, is placed on introducing children to authors and books appropriate to their grade level. As reading abilities



Sixth grader Martha Kenton has learned how to locate the books she needs when she visits a library.

and individual interests develop, students are encouraged to express their own opinions and offer their reading recommendations to their peers, not only in library, but in language arts classes as well.

Another means of fostering an appreciation of literature, as well as aiding in language development, is reading aloud to students, both in the library and in the classrooms. Reflecting the growing national concern with the adverse effects of excessive television on our young people's reading comprehension and communication skills, TLS also encourages all parents to read to their children on a regular basis. In addition to broadening students' acquaintance with literature, listening to books being read aloud stimulates their imagination, encourages critical thinking, lengthens their attention span, and strengthens reading, writing, and speaking skills. One can add to all those good things the fact that reading aloud is also a pleasurable experience for all.



Ninth grader Chad Massie finds the library can be a perfect place for quiet study.

As another important part of the learning process, classes in grades two through six become acquainted with reference and research materials available to them. Through various games and activities during library class time, they begin to develop the skills to locate, select, and interpret sources of information. This is a significant step to becoming a proficient, lifelong user of library resources. One popular activity, a library Easter egg hunt, usually dispels some of the uncertainties about the arrangement and location of nonfiction books. A trivia competition (occasionally spirited beyond the bounds of traditional library decorum) helps 5th and 6th graders to discover the wealth of information contained in almanacs and other standard reference books.

Upper school students do not have specifically scheduled library periods. They use the library individually whenever time permits, or as an entire class for research projects, general reference, or recreational reading.

Although reading promotion and reference/resource assistance to both students and teachers are among the most important roles of the library, the service of providing audiovisual equipment and materials has been augmented in the past few years by the widespread use of VCRs in schools. Traditionally very selective in their use of audiovisual materials in their classrooms, TLS teachers are finding more programming each year on Kentucky Educational Television which correlates closely with their courses of study. Therefore, based on faculty requests, the library regularly records programs that will be incorporated into later classroom instruction.

TLS continually evaluates and modifies its overall educational program concurrent with national trends and special considerations of our school community. So too, the library strives to build its program and services in response to changes and priorities in the total school environment. There is one prevailing goal, however, that is not subject to change: to cultivate a library aura that enhances the enjoyment of books and an enthusiasm for learning. Such an atmosphere reinforces not only the fundamental purpose of all libraries, but also the basic spirit of The Lexington School. All of us are surely enriched by preserving that heritage. ■

The middle and upper school science labs are better equipped than ever before. A brand new Apple II GS has taken up permanent residence down there and budding young biologists and chemists are clammering to get their hands on it. For students who finish their required lab units ahead of time there are enrichment labs available in various software packages. Chem Lab is a favorite with upper schoolers. They can make synthetic diamonds, gasoline additives, silicon chips, laughing gas, and vinegar for salads, without the cost, smoke, mess, stink, or bad taste. There is software for doing genetic experiments like crossing fruit flies or peas. Other simulation research involves issues in ecology. Students who need remediation and drill in basics such as symbols, formulae, equations, and terms find that the computer programs capture their interest and make science more accessible.

An Admission from Connie Freeman: She is Retiring

The Lexington School without Connie Freeman is something most of us have never known. She has taught our children; she has counselled us; she has buoyed our spirits; she has laughed with us; she has cried with us. In a career which spans 17 years at TLS, there isn't much that has escaped Connie's attention. There is very much that has benefited from her enthusiastic involvement.

Connie came to The Lexington School in 1972 as a middle school social studies teacher. She remained in that department until January 1974 when she took a leave of absence for the birth of daughter Amanda. Returning in 1978, Connie became part of the language arts and social studies departments. Her position that year also included advisor to both the yearbook and the school newspaper. In the fall of 1979, the Headmaster appointed her Middle School Division Head, a post she held for three years. From 1982 to the present, Mrs. Freeman has been the Director of Admissions. She has kept her finger on the pulse of the classroom by teaching a math section or two each year, as well.

Director of Admissions is the role that has let Connie Freeman's very real love for The Lexington School shine through. She has been a walking, talking P.R. packet whose enthusiasm has kindled involvement and interest in TLS for hundreds of families.

Upon the occasion of the announcement of her retirement, most of Connie's very close TLS friends were carefully avoiding all discussion of the issue with her. They were patiently awaiting the moment when tears didn't well up in their own eyes at the very thought of her leaving. The days marched on, nobody bringing up "the topic," everybody oblivious to the fact that everyone was doing the same thing. The realization occurred at a faculty gathering when someone admitted out loud that she just hadn't been able to talk about it with Connie yet. A long string of guilty "me eithers" followed, and the ridiculousness of the situation broke the ice. Yes, we cried with her and yes, we laughed with her, and yes, we will miss her.



A list of the duties that Connie assumed during her tenure at TLS, statistics about the accomplishments related to her creative energy, testimonials from students, and parents, and colleagues — all these things tell the story of someone whose shoes are not going to be easy to fill. "The rest of the story" is more a matter of sentiment than history.

Mrs. Freeman's renowned sense of humor was probably put to the test more during her tenure as Middle School Division Head than during any other. It seemed that she had to spend almost as much time dealing with naughty teachers as with erring children. I was the 5th grade homeroom teacher who had to confess to Connie that I had required one of my students to stand in the corner for some little indiscretion at dismissal time. Of course, the boy politely obliged. If the story could have ended right there, Connie and I could have both been happy. But, no.... This was no ordinary boy. This was a boy who lived all the way over in Midway. It was a boy whose father was Chairman of the Board of Trustees. And it was the boy whom I forgot to dismiss from his corner stance and who dutifully remained there until long after his carpool had left. Connie and Robert Brewer both kept their senses of humor on that occasion. I was mortified.

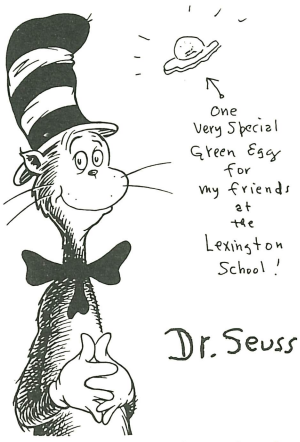
I will never be allowed to forget the day when Connie mistakenly thought she was giving a tour of the school to a husband and wife. I, on the other hand, being a long time acquaintance of one of the families, was aware that what she really had was the mother from one family and the father from a second. Glad to see my old friend, I interrupted the tour, greeted the woman and teased, "Aren't you with the wrong husband today?" Poor Connie! First she paled; then she turned red; then she stuttered and stammered and tried to continue her tour without the Middle School Division Head further questioning the moral or marital status of her visitors. Luckily for me, both families decided that TLS was their school of choice. Connie soon found out that my friend WAS with the wrong husband that day. We still laugh about this case of mistaken identity.

The memories become more vivid as I write, and the sense of loss becomes more imminent. Amanda graduates in June and the Freemans are moving to Arizona in July. Connie has been a friend for too long to make saying good-bye easy or lighthearted. Suffice it to say, "I will miss you, Connie."

Contributed by Marijo Foster
Middle School Division Head

What's Going On Around Here?

Throughout their unit on Dr. Seuss, Mrs. Smothers' kindergartners eagerly awaited the mailman's arrival at TLS each day. They were hoping for a letter in



response to notes they had sent to him about their favorite stories and characters. One person had written to Dr. Seuss that he knew his license plate said GRINCH. The response arrived in the form of a Cat in the Hat with "one very special green egg for my friends at The Lexington School." Dr. Seuss is 86 years young and he is just as big a hit with today's preschoolers as he was with their parents.

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"Life After TLS" was the topic for the final parent education evening for this year. Five alums and several parents graciously agreed to form a panel to discuss their feelings about high school or college with reference to their TLS experiences. Joe Fink, TLS parent and current Director of Admissions at UK, moderated the program.

There was unanimous agreement that the adjustment to public school was not that difficult. Nonetheless, several people felt that, knowing what high school is like, they would opt to spend their 9th grade year at TLS even if they could move on. They felt that the opportunities for personal growth in the smaller environment were not to be missed. All panelists said they felt well-respected by their high school counseling offices. "There was an almost automatic assumption of placement in honors courses." One young man credited his preparation for college to some of his Lexington School teachers.

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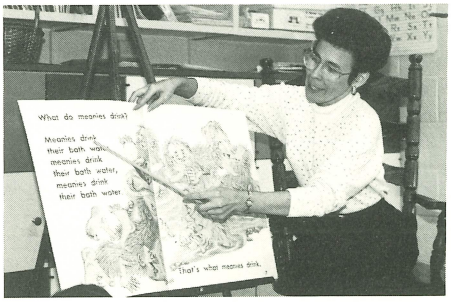
Lower school scientists cut their teeth on some really seedy topics. One unit in the 3rd grade curriculum is how living things grow. In the fall, students put a pair of socks on over their shoes and walked around in a field full of weeds. They returned to the lab to plant their dirty socks in flower pots. Watering diligently for two weeks, they eagerly awaited their crop. Much disappointment, and the feeling that "the experiment didn't work" ensued when the seeds embedded in their socks didn't grow. Along came spring and the pots were watered again. To everyone's delight, something wonderful is happening. The class has learned that seeds have a dormant cycle, and that no matter how much TLC they receive, they won't sprout until that cycle is complete. Experience is a fine teacher. ■

Big Books for Little People

Kindergartners at TLS don't know Dick and Jane or Spot and Puff. They are learning to read with materials developed in Australia, New Zealand, and England which approach the teaching of reading as a shared language experience. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are all important parts of the process.

Big books (approximately 17 x 19) are at the heart of the program. A small group of children, all of whom can see the words and the illustrations, hear a story for the first time as it is read by their teacher. The story is meaningful, interesting, and usually ends with a predictable twist. It's easy to follow because rhyme, rhythm, and repetition are incorporated into the text.

In a second reading, children listen to a cassette recording of the story and follow along with a smaller version of the big book in



their own lap. Some cassettes include musical activities and dramatization in yet a third reading.

The philosophy behind "Big Books" is basically that children learn to read by reading. The shared language experience involves the whole child, and active learning is both pleasurable and motivating. Visual and auditory senses are stimulated so that sight words, letter-sound associations, sequencing, and intonation creep in "through the fingers, through the toes, through the eyes, the ears, the ... nose." ■

Awards Abound In Arts and Letters

TLS students' writings have appeared recently in *Poetry and Prose,* a publication of the UK Art Museum. Designed as an educational component of an exhibition, The Best of American Illustration, the program sought to stimulate students to write more freely and creatively. A committee of museum docents read more than 350 works submitted from students in grades 3 through 12 before selecting the writings to be published. Sixteen schools participated. Thirty-six authors were published. Seven of these were TLS students. Congratulations to **Sarah Powell Talbott, Scott Hoffman, Katie Burrus, Jonny Fink, Martha Fournier, Jim Mahan,** and **Whitney Lagrew.** Hats off to their teachers too — **Jenny Davis, Ann Haynes, Jennifer Stith,** and **Hayat Bishara.**

On March 14 all of the 6th grade French students participated in "Le Grand Concours," the only national competition in French in the United States. Students are placed for this exam according to the amount of French they have had at the elementary level. Five students with the highest scores on the multiple choice



part of the test were allowed to take an oral component. Each cassette recorded exam was sent to California to be judged by a group of teachers who listened to tapes submitted from all over the country. **Virginia Bibb Golden, Shannon Lamkin,** and **Benjamin Self** received honorable mention in the competition. **Ann Carney** placed 4th in the United States and **Jason Whitlow** was 1st in the nation. For taking the top honor Jason was awarded a two-week scholarship from Concordia College to attend one of their 10 language camps. Jason will be going to their French camp in northwestern Minnesota.

In the past six years, the French department at TLS has had three students win 1st place in the nation in "Le Grand Concours."

Lower school art teacher **Isabel Kasperbauer** was one of 12 artists invited to participate in an exhibition called the "American Dream" sponsored by the Lexington Art League. The exhibition featured artists from diverse ethnic heritages who have enriched our community with their works. Mrs. Kasperbauer was further honored by receiving the show's purchase award. Her winning entry was a batik which was purchased by a local business for their new office headquarters.

Sales of **Jenny Davis'** book, *Goodbye and Keep Cold,* have been going very well. The novel has just been released in Danish.

Ninth grader **Amanda Freeman** entered a poetry contest and her work, "Lying Ahead," has been chosen for publication in a four volume anthology entitled *Days of Futures Past.* The Editor's Choice Award which Amanda won was the recognition given to 160 poems selected from 12,000 entries.

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