

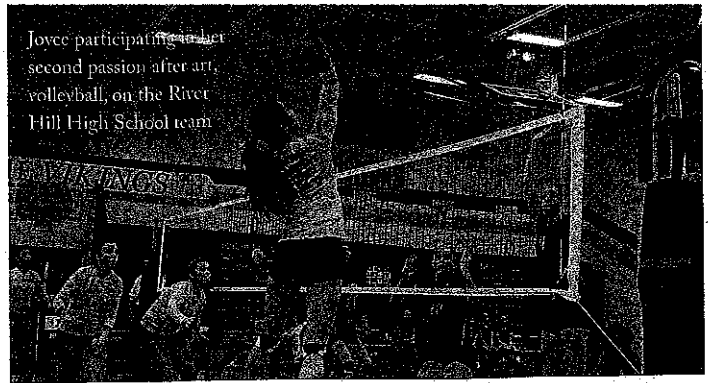
kids 2 kids



A Portrait of an Artist

By Junior Resident Writer, Grace Sullivan

Joyce painting a portrait of her father as part of a study of portraiture and realism for her AP Art IV class



Joyce participating in her second passion after art, volleyball, on the River Hill High School team

When Joyce Zhuang first learned how to hold a pencil at age two, something amazing happened. She did not yet know how to write words, but Joyce, now a seventeen-year-old senior at River Hill High School, found a different way to express herself. She explains, "My mom assumed I was holding pencils and pens just to imitate her. But one day, she discovered on a piece of notebook paper a small rabbit that I had drawn. It was nowhere near perfect, but it was clearly a rabbit." Her parents were thrilled to find that their young daughter had burgeoning artistic abilities, and they promptly enrolled her in art lessons.

As an activity, art is unique in that, "One really does not need certificates or awards to define achievement." However, Joyce's art has received its share of accolades. In middle school, Joyce participated in the Maryland Junior Duck Stamp Competition twice, acquiring an honorable mention the first year she competed and third place the following year. More recently, Joyce has been driven to improve by taking Advanced Placement Studio Art. Joyce says that this experience has pushed, "the boundaries of the traditional art that I learned with my private art teachers. I found myself becoming more creative, expressing my own life stories through my art."

Art is an individual activity in which a person must rely primarily on self-motivation. However, Joyce enjoys working in a studio with other artists. She says, "They push me to achieve more, but it also encourages me in that my ideas are not strange. They're unique and beautiful even if other people don't understand because I know I'll always have my family of artists who understand me."

As an artist, Joyce's work is central to her identity. She explains, "My art makes me feel proud and content. It's my comfort zone and a safe place where I can express how I feel. No one will judge me because it's art and all art is beautiful. Through the process of creating a piece, I always develop a special attachment to it. People have asked me if I would give my pieces to someone or sell my art, and my answer is always no. Unless I started the piece knowing it would part from me, I can't give it away. It's not just the time that I put into it but also my heart and soul. Some of the portraits I've done feel like my lifeblood, and they mean so much to me."

Joyce's work has shaped her as an individual. She explains, "I've learned that humans do not have rigid limits when it comes to their skills. I've pushed myself to what I thought was the limit but pushing myself only helped me to improve more. I know that as long as I push myself and stretch from my comfort zone, I can always do better." With this attitude, Joyce has created truly wonderful art, which in turn has made the world a more beautiful place.



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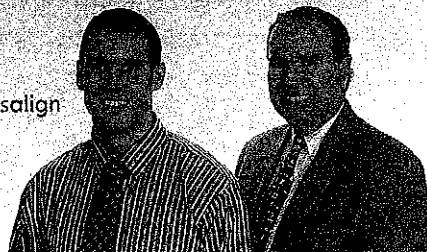
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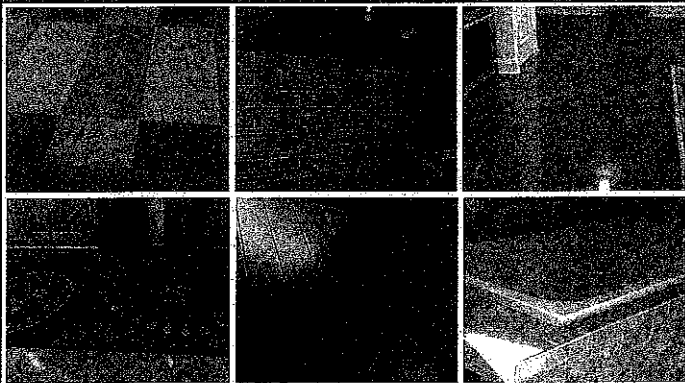


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Joyce standing next to a self-portrait displayed at a River Hill High School Art Department awards ceremony. According to Joyce, it represents her "Love for food and midnight snacking in my pajamas".

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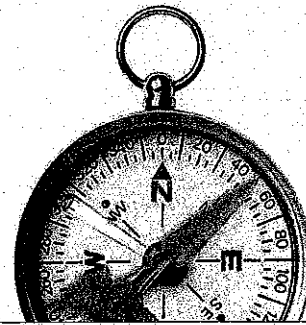
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