

FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS
& FRANKLIN FOOD BANK

Rising
Tides
of **Hunger**

POETRY ANTHOLOGY



Special thanks to all of our students in grades three through twelve who contributed original poems to make this anthology possible!

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HIGH SCHOOL FINALISTS

MARIA COLON PAULINO

ZARIFA MAMMADLI

KERRIGAN PETERSON

AANYA PRASAD

ARIANNA SANTANA



HIGH SCHOOL FINALIST

Poverty

A stomach rumbles
As the sea rumbles through the sand
A hungry boy
Listens to the news
"Plop" another glacier drowning in the poor rising
sea

Poverty is something they've always dealt with
But now:

Rising temperatures,
battered rain patterns,
wildfires
They can't catch a break, can they?



Just like dad can't catch a break
"Poor man" neighbors whisper
Another shift from 8-9
Like the belt from dad's pants holding us together

5 dollars an hour isn't enough
The fridge lays empty
Just like the farms
But maybe one day they'll be full again

*By Maria Colon Paulino
Franklin High School
Grade 9*

HIGH SCHOOL FINALIST

More Than Numbers

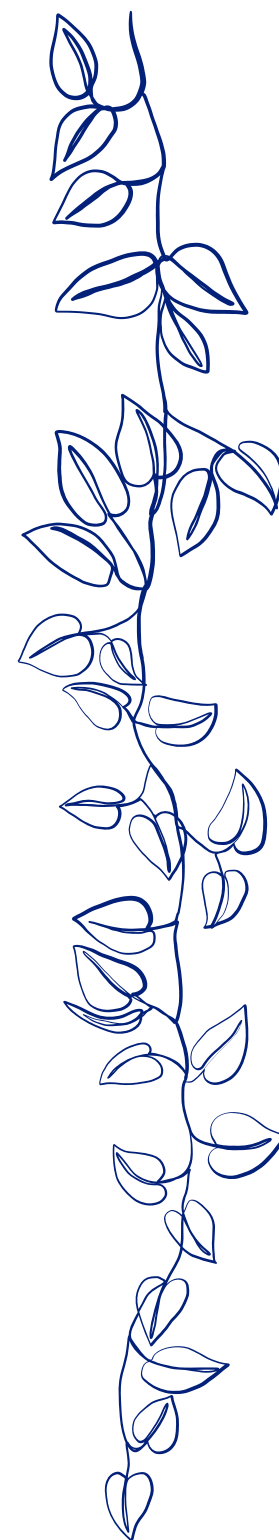
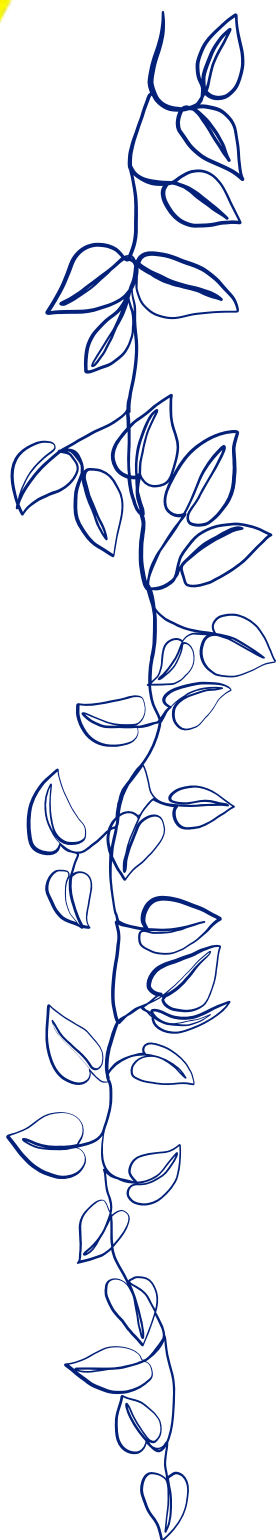
Hunger, you've felt it, just before a meal,
But for millions, it's a pain that's real.
One in eleven go hungry each day,
While nine million lives are lost this way.
A third of the world can't afford to eat right,
And 1.3 million face famine's blight.
Half of child deaths under age five
Are tied to hunger they don't survive.

These aren't just numbers, they are cries,
Echoing loud beneath our skies.
It's easy to speak, much harder to act -
But justice demands we face the fact.

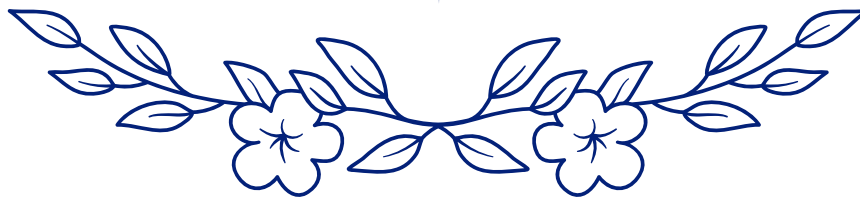
The crisis spreads to wild Earth's kin,
As climate change burns from deep within.
According to WWF, we've seen 69% loss
In wildlife populations, a tragic cost.
Habitats vanish, food chains fall,
From coral reefs to forests tall.

How can we feast while others fade?
Dreams deferred, and debts unpaid.
It's on us to make a start.
To feed one soul, to share one heart.
For only then can we begin
To lift the world from where it's been.

*By Zarifa Mammadli
Franklin High School
Grade 9*



HIGH SCHOOL FINALIST



Dull

I see the earth through my blue eyes,
a color that scientists say see more vibrantly than the eyes of the peers of mine.
And I'm used to watching the trees, bright and green as the school-bus passes, but lately they've begun to dull.
The sky isn't as bright- a grey haze wavers in the air as if it doesn't know whether to disperse or feed into the despair,

the tears the earth is crying, the rain, it burns, its a pain you only feel once you've learned-
and I've learned-
that such a human type of pain, the type I pray I never have to feel again,

is the type of pain the globe is feeling.

Every little thing around you, it breathes, it sighs,
it hurts and aches, chemically treated so that "it will all be safe",
but it's not that simple.

How do you expect us to sustain an environment that doesn't even know its own name?
That doesn't even know its true glory
because we've modified everything to be the best in the game- to have the best produce,
but at what price?
Only the rich can afford food that nice.

The rest are left with the junk that we've made,
"the self-indulgent treat," so to say,
the ones we're only supposed to eat on a holiday

but we reduced the happiness to microwave by frozen meals instead of food that heals because we cant afford it.
We make more waste than any other species on earth, and you expect us to continue this way?

These meals from the microwave turn into meals inside the landfill, turn into burying trash underground,

changing the roots of what America was found from-
not our principles but the soil we were built on... waste.

It's all gone to waste.

*By Kerrigan Peterson
Franklin High School
Grade 10*



HIGH SCHOOL FINALIST

Justice on the Table

Carrying a handful of plastic bags I entered the grocery store
And like any other day aisles filled with food feast
Tomatoes smeared beneath a man's shoe, green peas all over the floor
And dotted with forgotten grapes, now just purple smudges under passing carts.
"All this fresh food on the ground when it could have been inside a starving stomach"
Alongside this food feast, leftover grocery onions, potatoes, apples get thrown out!

Bias towards ugly produce is also a major issue
As I go over towards the eggplants, I never pick and choose
Just grab three, toss them into the plastic bag and into the cart as simple as that
My mom begins "these look bruised, it has five arms and bumps on it, this is repulsive
These will give us a stomach virus, so pick out nicer and normal looking ones!"
This bruised eggplant is fresh and the SAME! Looks don't alter taste or healthiness of it
This constant urge to pick and choose drives more pounds of produce to the trash
The perfect dazzle like a jewel appealing to the eyes, the ugly sit like a lump of coal

Farmers are on knees daily growing crops that won't cooperate due to weather patterns
Climate change is the uninvited chef in Earth's kitchen
Turning up the heat, spoiling ingredients, and farmers scrambling for a recipe that works
Shifting seasons confuse plants, farmers trying to migrate to a superior destination
The unpredictability of droughts burns crops and floods drown fields
Wildfires turning green dreams into brown dust
Hard ice smashing over crops and freezing them still
Under a fevered sun, the crops are robbed of their nutritious strength
And the wounded soil falls like ash, blanketing farms in a quiet sorrow

I'm over watching good food go to waste
It's time to change the plate, not just the conversations
In every wasted crumb, I hear a call for change and I will answer

After that visit to the grocery store, I've opted to visit three local supermarkets
There I'd collect their leftovers and donate to local food banks
Many farmers complain about poor soil as well, so composting was generated!
I've been composting for weeks now with the bin in Lincoln Park
Taking the leftovers at home, from stores, and twigs, sticks, leaves to toss in
Turning the bin and wala we are left with enriched soil that's now in the hands of farmers

The fight for food is the fight for my people and therefore I will never yield

*By Aanya Prasad
Franklin High School
Grade 10*



HIGH SCHOOL FINALIST

Two Different Worlds

I watch him sip from a cracked tin cup
while my stanley cup has ice cold water
filled to the brim.

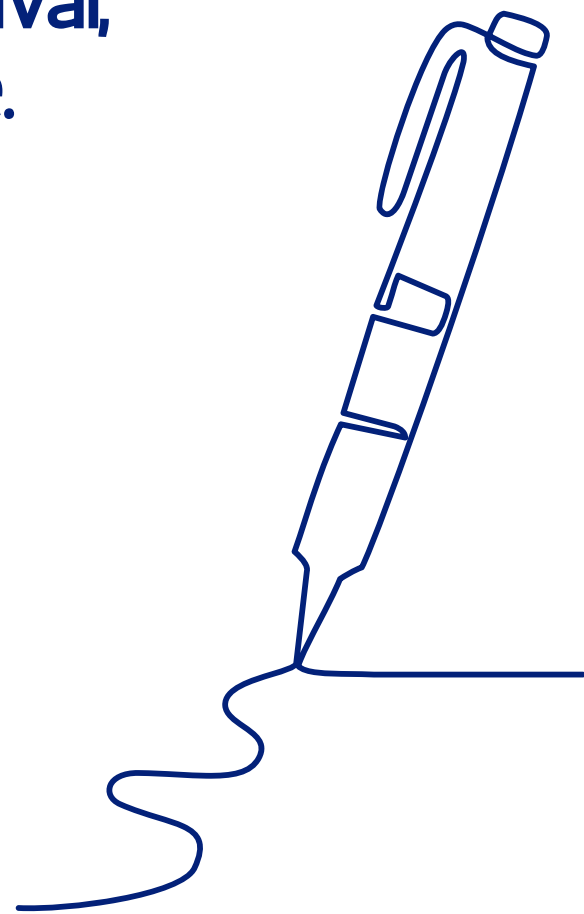
His lunch: canned beans eaten
with his own bare hands.

While all my snacks sit in my lunch box,
untouched.

The sun burns at both of us
but not the same,
his sweat is survival,
mine is shame.

He smiles,
I look away.

*By Arianna Santana
Franklin High School
Grade 9*



MIDDLE SCHOOL FINALISTS

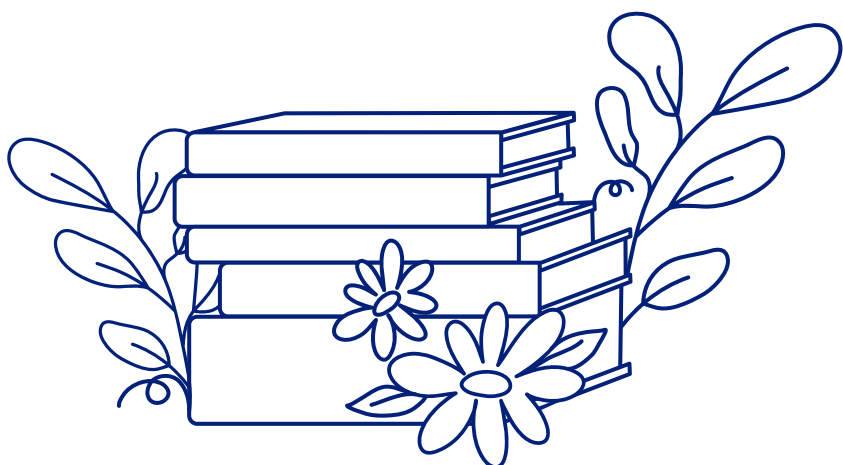
AVA GONZALES

JONAH MOSLEY-AVILES

ANJALI PATEL

ANIYLAH PAUL

ISABELA PEREZ



MIDDLE SCHOOL FINALIST

I See Her

I hate that look on moms face
The one filled with guilt
Desperation
Shame.

Either when she's paying the bills or opening the fridge
to find it empty.

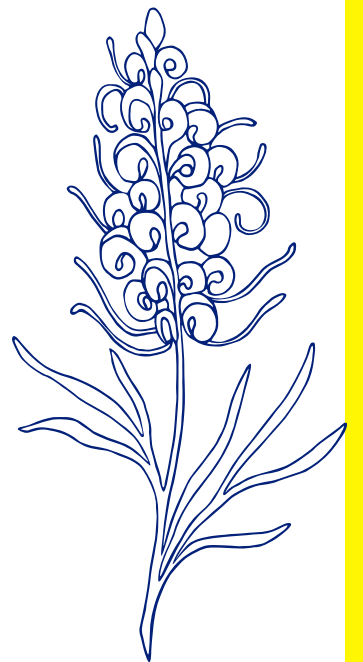
I want to help her
I need to help her

She thinks I don't notice
The way she skips meals
Claims that she's not hungry for the third time this
week
Just for the sake of her children

She stretches food out until she gets paid
Her multiple jobs support us only just
At times like this she wish her husband stayed

The fake smile that is supposed to comfort us is worn
Her silent sobs dig into me like a thorn
The tear stains on her face are just a reminder of the
things she gives so we can live

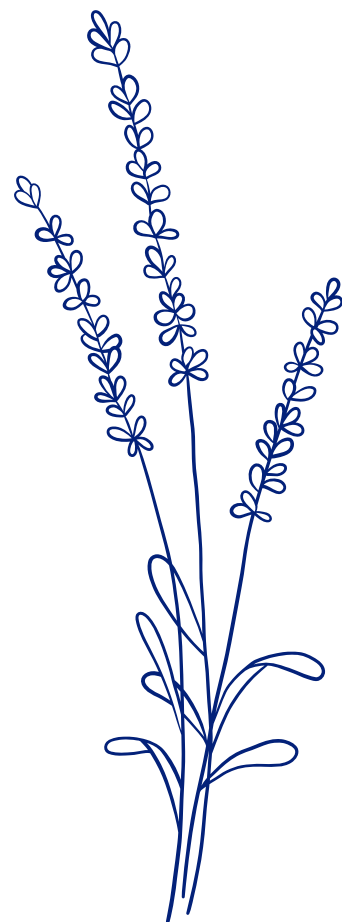
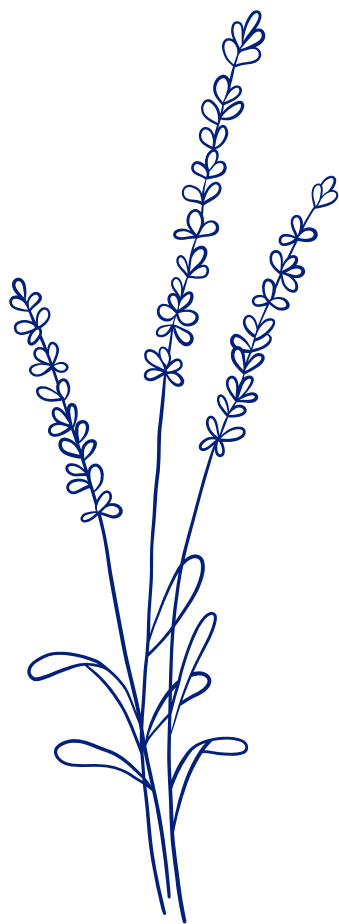
*By Ava Gonzales
FMS - Hamilton Street Campus
Grade 8*



MIDDLE SCHOOL FINALIST

A Call for Help

Take a look around,
Take a breath
Take a breath of air and feel,
How it fills you
Something so little yet so satisfying.
A breath.
Breathe,
Something you do all your life yet so unappreciated.
Grab the dirt,
Grab
Grab the dirt and feel,
How the soil leaves your hands as it falls back to a place
where it once lay asleep.
Eat some food, Eat
Eat, chew, swallow, and now feel.
Feel how it warms your mouth and stomach with excitement.
Feel how it makes something so short lasting feel like a
forever of warmth and comfort.
Now, see.
Open your eyes and see
how this is all changing,
the air now hurts to breathe,
And with every breath you can't help but cough.
You try to grab the dirt, yet now its ash from the forest fires
all around the world.
Eat, yet now it's something only few can afford.
You shake, turn, fall but all you can do is struggle for the
comfort you once had everyday.
Ring Ring! There's a call for help, everyones just too scared to
answer
Now, the phone is still ringing, someone just needs to get it.
We can fight back, this conclusion hasn't happened just yet.
This doesn't need to be our future , but from the track we're
on now.
We won't be running in the future.
Because all we do as humans is
Take, take, take,
Grab, grab grab,
And eat, eat, eat... all that is left of our home.
No, this isn't our future.
This happens at the end of a path we will refuse to go down.
So if you get the call
Pick up!



*By Jonah Mosley-Aviles
FMS - Hamilton Street Campus
Grade 7*

MIDDLE SCHOOL FINALIST

Mother Earth

I breathe
Slow and steady,
Lungs of forests stretching wide
Sunlight pressing warm against the hungry roots.

But you— you clog my lungs with smoke.
You spill poison into my veins.
You cut down my hands,
my arms,
my body,
until I reach, but nothing grows.

I once knew balance—
storms that sang,
winds that whispered,
rains that kissed the earth with promise.

Now, my voice is cracked,
my storms rage without mercy, my rains drown, or disappear.
The crops shrivel under skies too hot,
too angry.

The rivers forget their shape.
The fields turn brittle,
breaking apart under the weight of what you've done.

And yet, you wonder—
Where has the food gone?
Where has the water gone?
Why does the soil crumble between your fingers, dry as bone?

I ask you: Will you listen before I starve?
Will you change before I choke?
Will you stop before there is nothing left?

Your hands build.
Your hands burn
. But your hands—
they hold the power to heal, too.
Plant.
Protect.
Undo what you have done.
So that I may breathe again.
So that I may grow again.
So that I may feed you, forever.

*By Anjali Patel
FMS - Sampson Campus
Grade 8*



MIDDLE SCHOOL FINALIST

The Hunger They Don't Grade

I sit in honors class, sharp as a blade,
But my hunger wraps around me like a tight braid.
They praise my test scores, my raised hand, my grit,
But no one sees the nights I fake sleep, stomach lit
With fire that burns from the inside out
No dinner again, just silence and doubt.
The teacher smiles, says I'm going far,
But I'm running on fumes, wishing on stars.
I'm more than my struggle, but it won't let go,
Hunger is a shadow that stretches and grows.
It creeps in my closet, it lives in my skin,
A quiet battle no one thinks I could win.
Empty, empty my plate, my prayers, my pride,
Empty, empty the corners where my pain hides.

Still, I write essays with fire in my pen, Dreaming of the day
this fight will end.

I sit in honors class sharp as a blade,
My pencil moves while my stomach aches,
I solve equations while my whole body shakes.
They see A's on paper, not the pain in my eyes,
Not the skipped dinners, the late night cries,
I answer with confidence, speak with grace,
But no one notices the hunger in my face.
Hunger is a ghost that haunts my day,
It walks beside me in the gray lunchroom.
It whispers lies like, you don't belong,
But I've learned to fight, stay strong.
Empty, empty my lunchbox, my home.
Empty, empty I feel so alone.
I smile through it all, hold my head high,
But inside, I'm screaming asking why.
I am more than this hunger, more than the pain,
My dreams are seeds pushing through the rain.
My words are power, my voice is flame,
Even when they forget my name.
One day I'll rise, full and free,
A woman built from what they couldnt see.
But for now, I write and I survive,
A hungry girl, still burning alive.



*By Aniyah Paul
FMS - Sampson Campus
Grade 8*

MIDDLE SCHOOL FINALIST

Empty Cupboards, Full Heart

The fridge hums like a cruel joke tonight,
Its light casting shadows on shelves of air.
A half-empty carton, a bruised apple's fight -
I count the days, the dollars, the prayers.

My son asks for seconds, I fake a smile,
I scoop what's left, call it "Mom's special treat"
He's too young to see the silent trial,
How I chew lies just to make ends meet.

The school sent forms for lunch again,
But pride's a heavy coat I wear.
I sign my name with a trembling pen,
I hate the need, but love the care.

Grocery lists become battlegrounds,
Where I trade dreams for store-brand rice.
Cans lined up like soldiers, make no sound,
Measuring love in every slice.

I water down the milk each week,
I stir hope into a pot filled with beans.
Hide the tears I dare not speak,
I fold hunger into daily routines.

The world scrolls by with meals so grand,
I see chefs on screens, feasts on display.
But here I hold a tiny hand,
And whisper, "We'll be okay."

I give up peace for sleep at night,
I stack coupons like fragile cards.
My strength is in silence, out of sight,
In bruised palms and grocery guards.

This isn't a sob story,
This is armor worn with grace.
A mother's war for dignity,
With courage upon her face.

*By Isabela Perez
FMS - Sampson Campus
Grade 6*



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FINALISTS

JAMES BRAMBLE
MERCEDES FRANZ
CARTER GRANT
AIMA MALIK
AMY MATTHEWS



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FINALIST

Thoughts of a Meal

I sit in the bedroom
with food on my mind
Because all I had for dinner
Were pieces of lime

I look in the cupboard
For food that was spared
But of course once again
Nothing was there

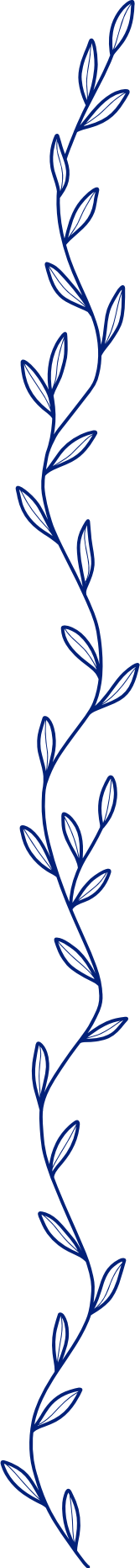
My stomach is empty
no, that isn't new
But tomorrow is school
I'll get food that's true



*By James Bramble
MacAfee Road School
Grade 5*

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FINALIST

A Little Help is All Someone Needs



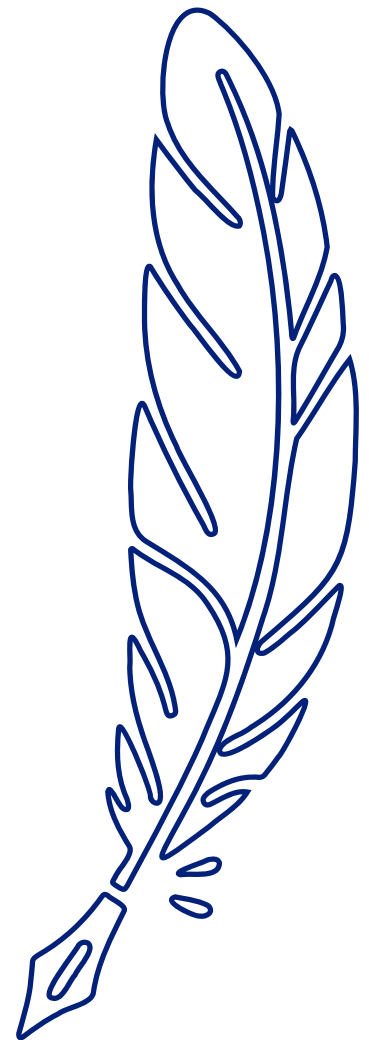
She was sitting down,praying that she would get food for her stomach. Her stomach was loud as a train. She got up and started to walk down to the bread store and mouth was drooling like a few drops of rain. She looked into her pockets and only saw a single,loney coin. Money was very tight for her. She was walking like a ghost. She had made it home and opened the door gently. She walked over to the fridge and hoped there would be at least some food to finally eat. She opened it and well,there was nothing to eat. She had tears in her eyes and a few drops dropped down through her face. She closed the fridge and saw a small piggy bank just waiting to be opened. She walked over to it and opened it and there was only 10 dollars and 3 cents. She was crying in joyful tears,jumping up and down. She ran out of the door like there was no tomorrow. She had made it into the bread store and bought bread and went out of the store. She was so happy she finally had food to eat but as she walked she saw a mom and a kid on the loud street. She grabbed the bread out of the bag and gently broke it into half. She gave it to them and they were very relieved to have food. "Thank you so much, how can we repay you?" She smiled "No need but eat for me, that is my repayment"

*By Mercedes Franz
Claremont Elementary School
Grade 5*

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FINALIST

Beautiful Things....

I believe it all starts with beautiful things
Cultures, religions...all living things
Then someone makes it all mess
But they don't really confess
That they aren't taking care of the rest
Polluting, damaging hurting the earth
I believe we should stand up to that person
And tell them they are creating a burden
I believe homeless should be housed
I believe hungry should have food in their mouths
I believe people of all races and religions
should walk the same streets
I believe all People should be in peace
I believe people deserve grace
Everyone deserves their own space
That's why every race is included
That's why no race is excluded
Some people are extremely food insecure
Some have more than enough food, that's for sure
I believe these extremes are unfair
I don't know how anyone can endure this,
I don't feel anyone should go through this
Some are soaked
And hungry as they sleep on the streets
Some are dry and safe
Inside on nice clean sheets
I don't why this is allowed
But i if it was up to me,
I would shout out loud in a crowd:
Our planet is messy and dirty!
I think it should be tidy and shiny!
So please help me clean up this beautiful planet!
And I promise mother nature
will never take it for granted!
I believe we can rise up,
clean up this mess as human beings
I believe we can help one another
I believe in beautiful things.....



*By Carter Grant
MacAfee Road School
Grade 4*

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FINALIST

The Earth's Hope

The earth cries out, in silent pain
As pollution rises, and forests wane
The future's uncertain, the present's strain
But still we hope, for a better refrain

The oceans rise, the glaciers fall
The consequences mount, for one and all
Yet in our hearts, a spark remains
A flame of hope, that fuels our brains

We can make a change, one step at a time
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, a rhythm divine
Let's unite as one, for the planet's sake
For a brighter tomorrow, we'll create

We can plant the seeds, of a greener day
Nurture the earth, and let love find its way
Every small step, adds up to a mile
Together we rise, with a hopeful smile

The earth is our home, our haven and nest
Let's protect it well, and let it rest
In harmony with nature, we'll find our way
To a brighter future, starting today

Let's cherish the air, the water, the land
Preserve the beauty, of this precious land
Forests, oceans, wildlife, and more
A delicate balance, we must adore

We'll walk the path, of sustainability
With renewable energy, we'll find clarity
A world united, for a common goal
A better future, for every soul

The moment's now, let's unite our way
With love and care, we'll face the day
We'll protect the earth, for all to see
And together, a brighter future we'll be.

*By Aima Malik
Franklin Park School
Grade 5*



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FINALIST

Last night I didn't have a meal
At this point I don't know how to feel

All the kids in my class always brag about their lunches
Not knowing that I only get a few munches

I had a hard time focusing in class today
My teacher got mad and sent me away

She said she wanted to speak to me
I didn't really want to but I dare not to disagree

I tried to leave before she could catch up
She seemed to remember and began to walk up

I had no choice but to tell her what was going on
I started to sweat as if I were in a marathon

Her face was serious while watching me, waiting for an answer
It was like not knowing the steps in a room full of dancers

I finally spoke and her face lit up
Not knowing I had been going through so much

She hugged me as if it meant something
I slightly smiled and walked away like it was nothing

The lump in my throat had finally withdrawn
At last my bad feelings had been gone

I couldn't help but tear up on my way out
Was this what food insecurity was really all about?

*By Amy Matthews
Hillcrest School
Grade 5*



Get Help
Reciba Ayuda

Give Help
Como Ayudar

The Market
El Mercado



Volunteer
Voluntariado



Community Distribution
Distribución Comunitaria



Support Services
Servicios de Apoyo



Donate Money
Donaciones Monetarias



Food Drive
Campañas De
Recolección De Alimentos



FranklinFoodBank.org