

# 2021 APRIL NEWSLETTER

2020 | HELENA MIDDLE SCHOOL | 2021



## April Introduction

Hey Bobcats, Welcome to yet another month at HMS! Spring has officially started so let's spring into this month! (I know that was bad, I think I should leave the puns to the Joke Column.) To kick off this month the Newsletter Group is releasing the results of the Art Competition, you can find all of the details relating to the competition and who the winner is down below on Page 4. To keep your April filled with many new and interesting activities Student Council is hosting a Spirit Week from April 19<sup>th</sup>-April 22<sup>nd</sup> so make sure to check out the articles on Pages 2 and 3 so that you can participate and show off your school spirit. Once again the Newsletter Group has brought back the incredible Joke and Advice Columns and this month we will be learning why the student ate his homework and how to better manage your stress, so make sure that you don't miss these new additions to the monthly columns! As always the library's new book section is stock full of incredible newly added reads so if you are looking for a new book we have listed some of our favorites in the "Featured New Titles" as well as this month's highlighted Take and Make Kit as inspiration for for your next stop at our HMS library. The Newsletter Group also got the opportunity to talk to the incredibly talented poet Tyler Knott Gregson in an interview that we were lucky enough to get the chance to conduct! And last but not certainly not least April 22<sup>nd</sup> is Earth Day! We wanted to dedicate a section of this Newsletter to Earth Day and it's origins and purpose. Many holidays like this one have been overcommercialized and or their overall purposes forgotten. We wanted to write a piece that could provide insight into the purposes and prevalence of this holiday, as well as show you what you can do to help and integrate sustainability and Ecofriendliness into our everyday lives. Thank you for reading and let's make April a great Month! -Written by Eva Skibicki

## Introduction

We have made it into April of 2021 so find out what is going on this Month at HMS and enjoy this month's Newsletter edition!

## Interview with Tyler Knott Gregson

This month the Newsletter has gotten the incredible opportunity to talk to the successful poet and author Tyler Knott Gregson. We took the most frequently asked questions from all of you placed the interview down below on how he started, his inspirations, and what made him fall in love with poetry. We also hosted the first ever podcast from HMS and the Newsletter so make sure to check that out on Spotify and Microsoft Streams for the full interview!

## STUDENT COUNCIL ACTIVITIES/MAY PHOTOGRAPHY CHALLENGE

As always STUCO has something incredible planned for the new month so scroll down to see what is going on and how you can participate in it. Page 3

## Advice Column/Art Competition Follow Up

In this month's advice column we will explore ways to deal with stress and anxiousness - Page 2

Find all of the art competition follow up (extensions and other details!) down below!

## Featured Titles and the Take and Make Kit of the Month

The library is constantly updating their New Books section and this month you can find the library's top April picks down below, as well as this month's featured Take and Make kit! Page 2

## Earth Day Article

This Month in the Newsletters ever changing History/Holiday section, we are observing Earth Day! You can find the why to this holiday when reading down below about its origins, purpose, and celebration around the world.

## Joke Column

Make sure to go check out the monthly joke column to fit in your daily dose of laughter! Page 3

## Featured New Titles and Take and Make Kit of the Month

Fun Fact: April is National Poetry Month. So, our very own library is bringing us some fun things to do with poetry. You could check out the Take-and-Make kit of the month and have some fun with poetry, or you could check out some of these fabulous novels written in verse! Or both. Here are some descriptions of the novels and the Take-and-Make kit.

- **Before the Ever After – Jaquelin Woodson**

ZJ's friends Ollie, Darry and Daniel help him cope when his father, a beloved professional football player, suffers severe headaches and memory loss that spell the end of his career.

- **Like Water on Stone – Dana Walrath**

Inspired by a true story, this relates the tale of siblings Sosi, Shahan, and Mariam who survive the Armenian genocide of 1915 by escaping from Turkey alone over the mountains.

- **Solo – Kwame Alexander**

Seventeen-year-old Blade Morrison, the son of fallen rock star Rutherford Morrison and the late Sunny Morrison, is struggling with his father's addiction and his girlfriend's betrayal when he learns he was adopted. He sets out on a journey to find his birth mother who is teaching in a small village in Ghana.

- **Knock Out – K.A. Holt**

When formerly medically fragile Levi discovers his love for boxing, he finds himself in the ring with those who love him most. He knows he's strong enough to fight for his life but can he convince everyone else to believe in him, too?

**Take and Make Kit of the Month:** This month's fun Take-and-Make Kit is the library's poetry Minecraft Activities. This is a way to combine poetry and the world of tech through gaming all in this little kit! If interested, come on down to the HMS library and ask a librarian; they don't bite!

Written by Lucille (Lucy) Uhl

### Art Competition Follow Up

Hello HMS! Last Month we started hosting the March-May Newsletter Competition! Originally it was just going to be March-April but after some complications we decided to give you an extra month to get all of your beautiful pieces turned in! All of the information relating to prizes and prompts is listed down below, so make sure to enter if you love prizes and art! Have a wonderful day Bobcats! -Written by Eva Skibicki  
Helena Middle school is continuing their art competition for all the art lovers out there. Use whichever art medium you want: drawing, painting, sculpture, etc. The size limit for sculptures is 8 1/2 inches tall and 7 1/2 inches wide.

If you want to participate, you must submit your art by April 25<sup>th</sup>. To submit your art, bring it to the library and give it to a librarian. The librarian will then put your art with the rest of the art pieces where it will be later be picked up for judging. Your art will be judged by our very own Mr. Kepler and Mrs. Smith. Your artwork must go off the prompts, and if it doesn't, your art will be returned for the time being until you have worked you piece somehow around the prompts. Abstract art is okay as long as you can explain how it fits the criteria and your thought processes! Make sure to title your piece and leave a description of what your art portrays and which prompt you have chosen (don't worry it doesn't need to be fancy) so that we can better understand what we are looking at! Now for the prizes, which I know is why any of you are even reading this. The prizes include a \$25 Costco Gift Card (courtesy of the HMS Student Council), a set of Prismacolor colored pencils (the best!) and your artwork will be featured in the next Newsletter (with your name, of course)! The runner up will also be given a shoutout in the Newsletter. Thank you for reading and here are your prompts:

Prompt #1: Best Day Ever (example: You got a new dog on your Best Day Ever, so you make a sculpture of your dog and title it "New Dog").

Prompt #2: Someone or something that makes you feel happy (example: Your dog, or your grandma, or pizza).

-Written by Lucille (Lucy) Uhl

### Advice from Ellie

Dealing with stress.

Lots of people have been dealing with stress and anxiety lately. Especially those who haven't been able to see friends or family for a long time or people who've been having trouble with online learning. There are many ways to deal with stress and anxiety, it's important that you find the right coping methods to deal with feelings like that. I'm going to suggest a few things that have helped me when I've been stressed out in the past.

First off, take breaks. It doesn't matter if you're doing school, playing sports, playing video games, whatever you might be doing, it's important to take breaks and just take a breather. In school, most teachers will take walks outside halfway through the period so people can get some fresh air, going outside is a great way to clear your mind and take a break from whatever you're doing.

Talking to people can also be very helpful. If you're feeling overwhelmed or stressed out, talking with friends can be great. It's a good distraction and sometimes your friends will be willing to talk about your problems and how you're feeling. Also, there are plenty of other people you can talk to, school counselors like Mr. Flatow and Ms. Glueckert are always here to talk with you about whatever you may be dealing with. You can also talk to a therapist or counselor about how you are feeling.

Finding other distractions like listening to music or reading or playing sports can also be a great way to deal with feelings of anxiety or stress, just do what you love!

I hope these tips are helpful for dealing with feelings of stress or anxiety. -Written by Ellie Clancy

Scroll down to see our interview with Tyler Knott Gregson and learn all about his career as a poet, as well as his influences, impacts, and how he came to love poetry.



Did you know?

In ancient Rome, April was the sacred month of the goddess Venus.

The word "April" is derived from the Latin term "Aprilis" meaning to open, in reference to the opening of flowers and blooming of various plants.

What's up everyone! Here are this months jokes...

(Q): What did the left eye say to the right eye?

(A): Between us, something smells!

HAHAHAHA, that was very funny, right?

(Q): Why did the student eat his homework?

(A): Because the teacher told him it was a piece of cake!

Have a great month!

-J. Fox

### Student Council Spirit Week

To keep your April filled with many fun activities Student Council is hosting a Spirit Week from April 19<sup>th</sup> – April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Make sure to show off all of your wackiest and best themed outfits this week! Stay Tuned and have fun with this month's spirit week!

### Spirit Week

Monday - Decades Day (6th grade 60's, 7th grade 70's, 8th grade 80's)

Tuesday - Twin Day

Wednesday - Tacky Tourists

Thursday - Earth Day. Eighth graders wear red to represent fire, seventh graders wear blue for water, sixth graders green for earth, teachers white to represent wind

### May Nature Photography Introduction

Hey HMS! May is next month, and it is also National Photography Month! In celebration of this month, the Newsletter Crew is providing an activity for all you photographers out there! Here is some information relating to it! Participants will submit their pictures to [gfriez@helenaschools.org](mailto:gfriez@helenaschools.org) where (if they are of nature and fit the basic requirements) they will be posted to the HMS library Facebook Page either in a collage with other pictures or standing by themselves. The goal is to get more people interested in photography and just have the chance to participate in something together! The pictures can be of anything nature: mountains, hills, a sunrise. But the pictures must be taken by them and noted where the picture was taken, and what time of day it was taken to prove your authenticity within the email to Mrs. Friez. Each picture that fits the requirements will be placed in the Newsletter and posted on the Facebook page, and each participant will have their name put in a drawing for a \$10 Target Gift Card. The winner will be drawn sometime in May. This is just a chance to showcase some student taken photos and potentially win a gift card in hopes of inspiring some new artists! We need the pictures by April 22<sup>nd</sup> for participation. Have a great day HMS!

- Written by Ella Shultz

## Earth Day. Past, Present, Future.

Earth Day has been celebrated worldwide for many years, but it's occurrence wasn't always like it is today. 1970 was the year of progress. In the years leading up to this, America had accepted the sludge and smoke billowing out of the factories and the inefficient vehicles producing exhaust rising into the lungs of all Americans. This all started to change once Senator Gaylord Nelson, Pete McCloskey, and Denis Hayes wanted to make the world a better place. They built a staff of about 85 people to promote awareness for Earth Day, which led to a large range of organizations supporting the cause. The movement sparked a variety of laws that protected the Environment. In the 1990's, Earth Day went global. Environmental issues were brought to the forefront and Recycling efforts were supersized. Looking back at what started it all, Earth Day is becoming more and more popular. Knowing what we now know, Earth Day is more important than ever. As we all look to the future, I think we all hope for a cleaner, brighter, more loved planet. After all, we only have one.

-Written by Esme Soller

### Recycling Club

Hey Bobcats! Speaking of Earth Day, does anybody recycle at their house? If so, good for you. If not, start if possible. Personally, my family recycles, and when I found out that HMS didn't recycle (Or at least, only recycled paper), I decided to do something about it, so I started a club! My club is the Recycling Club, and we would love your help with it! We will help HMS recycle by raising money, purchasing bins, and encouraging others to recycle. If you would like to join, please contact me at [luhl@helenastudent.org](mailto:luhl@helenastudent.org)! Thanks, Bobcats!

- Written by Lucille (Lucy) Uhl

### Poetry Out Loud Organization and Competition

So to all of you poets and writers out there, we wanted to showcase an opportunity to compete with your writing at a city, state, and national level in a competition open to all high school students! So, as you could probably tell by the title, today I will give you a basic run down about the purposes, entrance guides, and what you can submit for the National Poetry Out Loud Competition! Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program. Its overall purpose is to promote the study and performance of poetry around the country by contributing and offering free education materials and a country-wide poetry recitation competition. It has helped hundreds of students in the continental and territorial US learn about and gain public speaking skills, building self-confidence in one's work, and education about literary history and contemporary life. Poetry Out Loud can be done both virtually or in person and starts at the local or schoolwide level. Winners then advance to the regional/state level, and then to the national finals. Each winner at the state level receives \$200 and competes in the national finals, and their school receives \$500 for funds directed toward schoolwide expansion or availability of materials. This organization also has public access to free curriculum materials, all available online, that relate to the study of poetry and so much more. If in a few years are you are interested in participating in the official program please contact your state art agency, and if you would like more information on the competition and mission of the Poetry Out Loud Organization be sure to visit their website [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org)! - Written by Eva Skibicki

### National Poetry Month

As you may or may not know, April is National Poetry Month! This event was created by the Academy of American Poets in 1996 to remind us the impactful role that poetry and poets can play in our cultures, society, and overall lives. In fact, April of 2021 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this annual celebration. We have the opportunity to use this month as a platform for celebrating poetry and all of the amazing people who write it. Which leads me directly into my next point, on the final page of the Newsletter we have had the opportunity to chat with the talented, successful, and insanely nice Tyler Knott Gregson. We talk about his career, influences, inspirations, and "failures" throughout his life and how they led him to become who he wanted to be. All of the questions have been collected from around the student body combined with some more individual ones so that we can use this chance to learn more about Mr. Gregson's life, and of course poetry. You can find two of his books "Chasers of the Light; Poems from the Typewriter Series" and "Miracle in the Mundane; Poems, Prompts and Inspiration to unlock your Creativity and Unfiltered Joy" in the HMS library, as well as find him on instagram at [@tylerknott](https://www.instagram.com/tylerknott) or on his website [tylerknott.com](http://tylerknott.com) and [chasersofthelight.com](http://chasersofthelight.com). I really hope you check out and enjoy the interview, it really was an incredible opportunity and experience, and we are so grateful to have gotten the chance to converse with him! Find the full interview on Spotify at the Chasers of the Light Platform or chat [eskibicki@helenastudent.org](mailto:eskibicki@helenastudent.org) for the full written version! Have a great day Bobcats!

-Written by Eva Skibicki

## Interview with Tyler

Hey Bobcats! And welcome to the Newsletter's first ever interview podcast with Tyler Knott Gregson! This is a written sneak peak into the podcast interview which can both be found on Spotify and Microsoft Stream with almost all of the questions from you guys included in the interview (16 consecutive questions!) If you would prefer to read rather than listen and want a full written version, feel free to email me at [eskibicki@helenastudent.org](mailto:eskibicki@helenastudent.org), for the full copy. In this you can find tips for how to overcome writers block, how he got into photography and poetry, if it was hard for him to start making a living in his fields, the favorite aspects of his jobs, and so much more. So, to all of our readers welcome, thank you for being here, and I hope you are all doing wonderfully. In case you missed it, Mr. Gregson is a local poet and photographer with 6 poetry books, which is just incredible, and absolutely stunning photography from all around the world. So now that we have gotten that little run down out of the way, let's get into it!

1. Did you always know that you wanted to be a writer and or photographer as your career?

I always knew that I needed to write. I started writing when I was very young just because my brain is a really weird place, so I didn't really fit into the way that school worked most of the time. Writing was my own little secret thing that I could do when I was supposed to be taking notes, or doing class, I would just write and would make me feel better. More often than not I would just want to run out of the classroom, and so writing gave me kind of like a little safe, quiet place where I could just say what I wanted to say how I wanted to say it, I didn't have to follow the rules or anything. But I never thought that it would lead to a career, especially because when I was in school I think that teachers were way more 'You have to get a job that pays well, you have to do this, and don't go to college for something silly' and so writing was a thing that fell under that umbrella, I had teachers that told me that I would never make a career out of writing and that I just shouldn't even try because there was no money there. But I always thought that I just didn't even care, writing was just something that made me feel better, which is why I wanted to do it in the first place. But I honestly never thought a career would come out of it, and also not with photography, originally they were both just things I loved doing, but I never expected that I would make a living or travel the world because of it.

2. So, when you were figuring all of this out and found yourself really wanting to be a poet and photographer how did you overcome this sort of societal idealization or norm that what you wanted to do wasn't necessarily a logical career choice because you wouldn't make enough money or weren't "talented" enough?

Honestly, I just kind of fell into everything. I am somewhere on the Autism spectrum so I always knew that having a normal job would be really tough for me, and going to an office and having set hours and things like that. It was always my real goal was to figure out a way to make a living and support myself and eventually a family, and not have to do all of those things. Once I started figuring out that maybe there was a chance with photography and writing that despite what everyone said about how there was no money there and how it wasn't a real job, that there is a way and that creatives and artists can make their way in the world where you don't have to be a doctor or a lawyer. There are little spaces that people can disappear into and still do well for themselves. I think that once I started seeing that, and started seeing that 'Hey, I am paying my bills with this' it gave me a little bit more confidence and peace to just kind of distance myself further from that traditional job and from that traditional world. I think that was it, once I started seeing that it was possible, it gave me the confidence to go for it. You don't have to follow the same road that everyone else has walked down.

3. What things have influenced you the most in your career to get where you are today? Whether this be a person, religion, events, or anything else that comes to mind.

I think reading was one of the biggest ones. I have read a lot, ever since I was a little kid. I've just loved to read, and I think that I was so inspired by the way that other people could make words come together and dance. I loved the way writers could make words sometimes seem playful or dark, and I always thought that writing was one of the hardest arts because you only have the same 26 letters in the English language. Everyone has the same ones. It isn't like if you are a really great photographer and you get paid for that, you can buy the greatest equipment money can buy and the nicest lenses and things like that. And that really does influence how good your product is. If you are using a cell phone to shoot a wedding it is going to look much different than say the lenses that we use. But with writing everybody gets those same 26 letters. And yes, you could learn bigger words, but that doesn't necessarily make the writing better. That was something for me that made me really interested whenever I was reading other peoples writing and thinking 'gosh, how did they take those same words that I know but make me afraid or make me excited?' The more I read, the more influenced I was by wanting to see how I could do that and to see what was in it for me. As far as photography goes, I have always seen the world in a very strange way, and so I've always thought that with my writing I write about things that I can't take a picture of. Whether it's an emotion or a feeling. But with photography I have the opportunity to show the world things that I don't know how to write about. And those were always the biggest things, just trying to clear out the clutter in my brain and show someone else what I see and how I see it.

-Ty These are just 3 of the 16 questions that we asked in our interview with Tyler Knott Gregson, so make sure to go check out the rest of interview in our podcast on Spotify from the Chasers of the Light Platform. You can listen to it in the background of doing schoolwork or on a walk or anything like that, so do not worry about finding a large chunk of time to do nothing but listen (Though you can of course do that too.) Mr. Gregson has so many inspiring things to say, and the interview has been an incredibly positive experience. So, if you want to send any thank you's to him after listening we are putting together a thank you note for him from the students at HMS so make sure to chat me those messages at [eskibicki@helenastudent.org](mailto:eskibicki@helenastudent.org) on Teams or through Outlook so that we can show our appreciation. We really hope you enjoy the Newsletter's first ever podcast! If you have made it thus far, thank you so much for reading and have a wonderful day HMS!

Piece put together by Eva Skibicki, all responses credited to Tyler Knott Gregson

-Tyler Knott Gregson-

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