

Third Place Junior Poetry
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Old Donation School, Mrs. Lisa Kilczewski

It All Starts Today

A sharp pain, like a knife through your stomach.

A persistent ache, like a punch to the gut.

You can't escape it while awake; you sleep.

And when you close your eyes and enter the new realm of your mind, you relax.

You're safe.

Or so you thought.

The darkness, pain, approaches you.

You can't see it.

But you know.

And so you open your eyes and wake.

Of course you can't escape.

You've tried before.

You peer in the broken fridge with a cracked shelf and missing handle.

Nothing.

The dusty old pantry?

Nothing.

You walk back to your room.

You won't get anything today.

It's Sunday, and there's no school, so no breakfast, no lunch.

The clock ticks away like a prisoner, etching at the walls of their cell with a knife.

Tick, tock.

Pain.

Tick, tock.

You can't take the pain. It
envelops you and twists you,
stretches and squishes, bends
and contorts you.

Tick, tock.

How long has passed?

It feels like a millennium.

You look at the clock.

1 hour.

Tick, tock.

As you think back to that day,
a day full of pain, you can't
help but smile.

You remember how your mother came back grinning from ear to ear, like a little kid on
Christmas Day.

You remember the two words she said, the only two you heard, anyway.

Food Bank.

You tore into that meal like a mad animal.

Your mother laughed and told you to slow down, otherwise your stomach would hurt.

You didn't, but you and her laughed.

As you remember, you shake your head.

You were 10 then.

It's been two years.

Your family was stable again, financially.

As you walk into the office, you smile at the lady at the desk.

She smiles back.

You drop your can of tomato soup into the colorful cardboard donation bin for the food bank.

The same meal you had that fateful day.

It felt good to give something back and give away.

And there you thought to yourself,

“Why only once, only now? I can do more!”

Next week, you and your friends come down the hall, sporting big Walmart plastic bags full of food.

You told your friends.

And you and them made a difference.

And you tell them:

“It all starts today.”