

PALMARIUM

The Return

When the COVID pandemic shutdown schools for in-person learning back in March 2020 the PALMARIUM went on hiatus as the TCA leadership team focused on other pandemic-related issues. As we turn the calendar page to January 2021 it is time to publish a new volume. The first volume of this newsletter was published back in September 2013. You can use this [link](#) to revisit those earlier editions and the philosophy and Core Values related articles written over the past *seven* years. Thank you for reading, and may this new year hopefully bring more normalcy for our schools, families, and community.

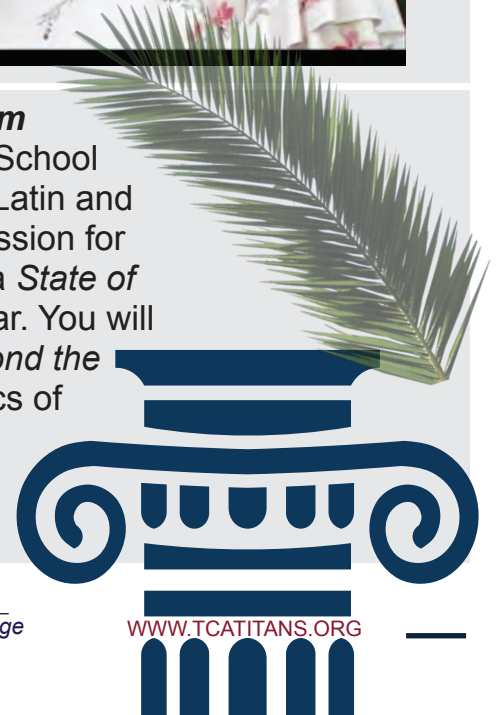
TITAN OF THE YEAR AWARD 2019-2020

Back in August, at the beginning of school, Lisa Kuyper, Central Elementary PE Teacher was named the Titan of the Year for the 2019-2020 school year. The Titan of the Year video can be found [here](#). When you think of what it means to be a Titan, Lisa is a perfect example. She is a constant model of respect, passion, humility, and imagination.



In this month's *WHY I TEACH: Stories from the Classroom* series, Bleys Kueck, High School Foreign Language Department Lead, plus Latin and Civics teacher, shares with us about his passion for teaching. In addition Dr. Sojourner shares a *State of the School* update as we begin the new year. You will also find information on the upcoming *Beyond the Book Club* studies, in addition to other topics of interest.

The Editor





History of the Titans Name

From the activities newsletter:

The original mascot for The Classical Academy was not the Titans. It was the **Eagles** . . . that is right - 1, 2, 3, **Eagles Soar!**

The problem was that Eagles was a popular mascot also for ECA, Pine Creek, and PPC just to name a few schools. The search for a new mascot took place in the 2000-2001 school year. Some of the mascot names considered were the **Ostriches** (did not make the ballot), the **Jumping Mice** (also did not make the ballot).

The final ballot for student votes had four options:

Pioneers
Trail Blazers
Eagles
Titans

Titans took the honors and the Eagles mascot was retired. Wonder if the fact that the movie *Remember the Titans* came out in September 2000 had any impact?

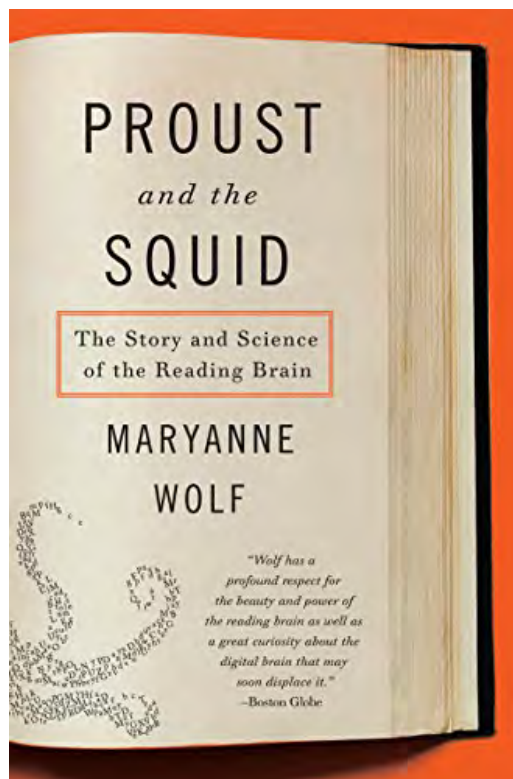
TCA North Construction Update

The new construction at the North Campus is well underway. The 27,391 square foot addition will provide acoustically designed choir and band classrooms, a spacious weight room and wrestling area, and other additional athletic functional spaces. As you can see in the image below, the exterior enclosure is nearing completion, as well as most of the interior framing. The \$7.6 million project is scheduled for completion at the end of March 2021.



ENGAGING MINDS:

The sixth of nine *Beyond the Book Club* book studies of the school year with staff will be on **Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain** by Maryanne Wolf. The book study sessions last ninety minutes each (and are being held via Zoom this year). Currently, we plan on two sessions for the Wolf book on **Tuesday-Wednesday, February 9-10** from 4:30 -6:00 pm. We may add a third date or additional timeframe on the listed dates if the interest warrants. Parents are also welcome in our studies. If you'd like to join us for this one or any of the remaining titles listed below send an e-mail to wjolly@asd20.org and I'll add you to the RSVP lists. Three studies remain after Wolf's book. On Wednesday, March 10 will be discussing **The Picture of Dorian Gray** by Oscar Wilde. Then on Wednesday, April 7 we'll meet to discuss **April 1865: The Month that Saved America** by Jay Winik. We finish the book club readings for the year on Tuesday-Wednesday, May 4-5, on the title **The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey** by Candice Millard. **PAGE 2**



The plan was to go to law school. I knew **I liked Latin** and had kept up studying it in college, adding Greek as well, plus a good amount of philosophy classes in addition to my gen eds. I even attended meetings of the Pre-Law groups on campus and started looking at the LSAT, trying to find what all was out there for someone with a law degree. Then I spent a semester in Rome.

I had first gone to Rome on a high school trip sponsored by **my Latin teacher, Mr. Gumerlock**, who plays a major role in this story. It was a weeklong blitz of Rome, Pompeii, Athens, Delphi, and afterwards I knew I had to go back, and was fortunate to spend a study abroad semester in Rome in college. Halfway through the semester, I called my (then) fiancée and told her: No more law school, I want to be a teacher. **She still married me.**

The initial impetus for my change in plans was simple: I loved Latin and Rome and the Classics too much to leave them behind and study law. During my semester abroad I had to “teach” a couple topics to my classmates. I still remember what they were, though I don’t know how well I taught them (if you need to know: the disastrous Sicilian Expedition by Athens in the Peloponnesian War and the Christian community in Ostia), but getting over the nerves of presenting this information to others got me **thinking about whether this was something I wanted to do with my life.**

You’ll notice that my first desire to teach was based on content: I loved Latin and all things Classical, and I wanted to share that with others, but what really mattered was the Latin. I met experienced teachers early on who said things like, “I don’t teach my subject, I teach kids,” and I wasn’t sure what to make of that. **I wanted to teach Latin!**



So I did. Then I started realizing what those experienced teachers meant. My favorite times in the classroom were when I could see **the light bulbs come on over students’ heads** when they realized how a linguistic topic worked, or when they took true joy in decoding and analyzing a Latin sentence, or when they connected Roman culture to their own. As I gained more experience, I started to be able to see **the impact my class, not my content** but my class, had on my students. Whether they told me they knew more about other disciplines through Latin or history or rhetoric, or came back and visited and said they remembered a particularly meaningful day in class, or emailed me to let me know that that one thing we spent that one day talking about came up somewhere else later in life, I came to realize that **“I don’t teach my subject, I teach kids.”**

WHY I TEACH: Stories from the Classroom

Of course, Mr. Gumerlock showed me how to do that, whether by guiding me in what to translate as a senior in high school or being there to give me advice when I needed it (whether I asked or not!), or taking our class to Rome. Also, **my mom and my step dad** showed me how to do that, through **their combined nearly 60 years in education**; I never set out to be like them, but looking back now I can see their influence, especially since my first Latin book was my step dad’s old one. Those teachers I worked with early on who showed me how to prioritize students and focus on the whole child, where would I be without them? And now, the community I am privileged to work with here at TCA continues to help me strive to teach kids as best I can.

So, why do I teach? **It’s the kids**, like those teachers I first met long ago said. What can I do to help them

learn? What can I do to help them become better people? What can I do to model virtue, citizenship, and scholarship for them? **How can I be there for them**, whether they know they need it or not? Of course it’s nice when they come back and say what my class meant to them (side note: I had two recent graduates recently spend about an hour in my room talking about their lives, studies, and experiences post-TCA. One is focusing on STEM and medicine, the other on business and economics, but they both wanted to have a talk like “the good old days in Civics,” so we talked. About the House floor impeachment speeches, universal basic income and its relationship to technological developments, China as it relates to Hong Kong and the Uighurs, the economics of professional sports leagues, and more. These students were taking what we had taught them over their TCA education and applying it all to finding their place in the world, or we might say, to striving to be “exemplary citizens equipped with analytical thinking skills, virtuous character, and a passion for learning, all built upon a solid foundation of knowledge.”), or come back and teach at the school (sometimes even in my same department!), or send a kind email, but even without any of that, **who knows what seeds we plant will grow and where our years of cultivation will lead?** The details don’t matter so much, because “I don’t teach my subject, **I teach kids.**”

BLEYS KUECK

Foreign Language Department Lead
Latin & Civics Teacher



note: this article was written last school year (2019-2020) before the closure

Where We've Been - Where We're Headed by Dr. Sojourner

On Monday January 4th, as our staff returned from a hopefully restful, safe, healthy, and peaceful Winter Break, I virtually presented my annual TCA State of the School report. When I became school President back in 2014, I started walking through this presentation with staff as a way of giving them a glimpse into the overall "health" of our school, discussing the big picture areas that I ask our Board of Directors to attend to each year when determining if TCA is functioning as it should. Examples of the questions I consistently suggest that our Board ask themselves as measures of TCA success, and that I try to include in the State of the School presentation, are shown below:

- Are we living up to the words in our Core Values document?
- Are our students achieving and growing academically?
- Are our facilities safe and secure?
- Are we financially strong?
- What do our parents (and students) think about our schools?
- Does our staff appreciate working here, and do they feel valued and respected?



This year, for the first time ever (and hopefully for the last time ever), I included a seventh important question, which in actuality has become THE measure of our success during the pandemic:

- How are we surviving (even if we're not necessarily thriving) COVID?

Through the miracle of virtual meetings and gatherings necessitated by the pandemic, my entire presentation can be viewed via our YouTube channel at the following link: <https://youtu.be/utlIfChCnL4>, and most of our staff viewed real time. However, if you missed it, or don't have the time or energy to spend 35 minutes watching my every word, I'll include a few summary statements below, citing two reports that are delivered each year to District 20 leadership. The first is actually a yearly TCA evaluation, performed by the independent TCA-D20 Board Liaison (Mr. Tom Weston), and the second is one that I deliver annually to the D20 Board of Education. I believe the quotes below (also included in my January 4th presentation) capture well the overall state of our school, especially regarding COVID response and future plans:



TCA-ASD20 Board Liaison (regarding Academics and Core Values):

"TCA has set a particularly high bar in every imaginable academic category, and per previous annual reports, it has been noted that TCA, the largest charter school in Colorado, is a model educational program. TCA believes in what they are, in who they are, and in what they believe about education. They are in lock step with their Core Values and philosophy. They are true to their Mission and their Vision. TCA understands they are not for every student; but they welcome all students. They have established themselves as a school that is committed to what they believe and they do not apologize for their uniqueness. In fact, they celebrate it, and they have multiple reasons to do so."

TCA-ASD20 Board Liaison (regarding COVID Response):

"It cannot be overstated how TCA leadership, faculty, and staff stepped up into a suddenly altered present, looked into a future that was as dark, unknown and unpredictable as anything could be, and cobbled together a plan to see them and their students through the 2019-2020 school year, all the while assembling an educational vision to develop protocols that would make the 2020-2021 school year the best it could possibly be under the circumstances. When a community understands the rationale, the motivation, and most importantly understands that the decisions made are being made because leadership truly believes it is in the best interest of the students and the families of TCA, they are more likely to support the actions taken. This is one of the things that has made TCA so successful. There is no question about what drives decisions. In every instance, the school moves in a direction that they truly believe is best for students."

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[continued from previous page] TCA Monitoring Report to ASD20 (regarding COVID Response):

"Since March 2020, our focus (unfortunately, almost our singular focus) has been on COVID response – with the goal of returning to in-person learning under normal operations as much as possible, while also offering an at-home (E-Learning) option for families that are at risk. Like other schools/districts, we've found maintenance of both the at-home and in-person content delivery models to be extremely challenging, as most teachers have students in both environments. In addition, managing quarantines (to date involving approximately 200 cohorts, 3500 students, 250 staff) brings tremendous challenges, as does consistent and thorough application of health precautions and protocols. Lack of substitute/guest teachers for daily backfill of staff who are in isolation, quarantine, or experiencing illness symptoms has been extremely difficult. Furthermore, approximately 12% of our staff have asked for health-related workplace accommodations. Taken together, as I've stated several times since August, returning to school has been amazingly positive, yet amazingly difficult."

As I concluded my presentation to our staff, I ended with an optimistic assessment, and prediction, for the future. First, that even though this year has thus far been amazingly difficult, we've done it, with excellence, while being one of the only school systems in the area that returned to in-person learning during the first week of January – while still remaining healthy and safe. Secondly, acknowledging that it has been incredibly difficult to predict the future during these unprecedented times, I do believe we'll begin to experience reduced quarantines and closures, and our staff will start to see vaccinations soon. Furthermore, in August I'm hopeful that we'll return to 100% in-person learning and normalcy with regard to academics, extracurricular activities and sports, and reduced emphasis on health protocols and precautions (though some may remain, such as mask wearing, emphasis on hand washing/sanitizing, etc.). But finally, the thing that will assuredly remain, now and in the future... we'll continue to help our students become extraordinary. For that, I'm so very thankful to be part of the TCA community. I hope you are too.

ANNUAL TCA NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Dear TCA Staff, Parents, and Community,

The Classical Academy (TCA) is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination. Respect for the dignity and worth of each individual shall be paramount. Accordingly, we have a "no tolerance" policy with respect to acts of discrimination or harassment. All TCA educational programs, activities, and employment opportunities offered by the school are offered without regard to disability, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, religion, ancestry, age, genetic information, or conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth. With respect to employment practices, TCA does not discriminate on the basis of age.

Protecting against and not tolerating discrimination and harassment is consistent with TCA's Core Values and our Creed, which states that "Titans love, respect, and protect one another. Striving to be our best, do our best, and give our best to the world." Policy AC-TCA: Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity was recently updated and is available by clicking [here](#). This policy outlines the procedures on how students, parents, staff, and the community may file complaints and how TCA will work to resolve all complaints.

The Classical Academy is committed to conducting prompt investigations. Any students or staff found to have engaged in any type of discrimination or harassment will be disciplined, and if circumstances warrant, suspension or expulsion of students may result. Consequences of discrimination for employees may include, but are not limited to, termination of employment. Let's work together to prevent all types of discrimination and harassment.

Any student, staff member, or parent should report any discrimination or harassment, including any Title IX, Section 504, or ADA complaints, to any TCA principal, counselor, or the following liaison:

Cheryl Birkey
Compliance Officer/Title IX Coordinator
975 Stout Road, Room 1114
Colorado Springs, CO 80921
719-488-6209
cbirkey1@asd20.org

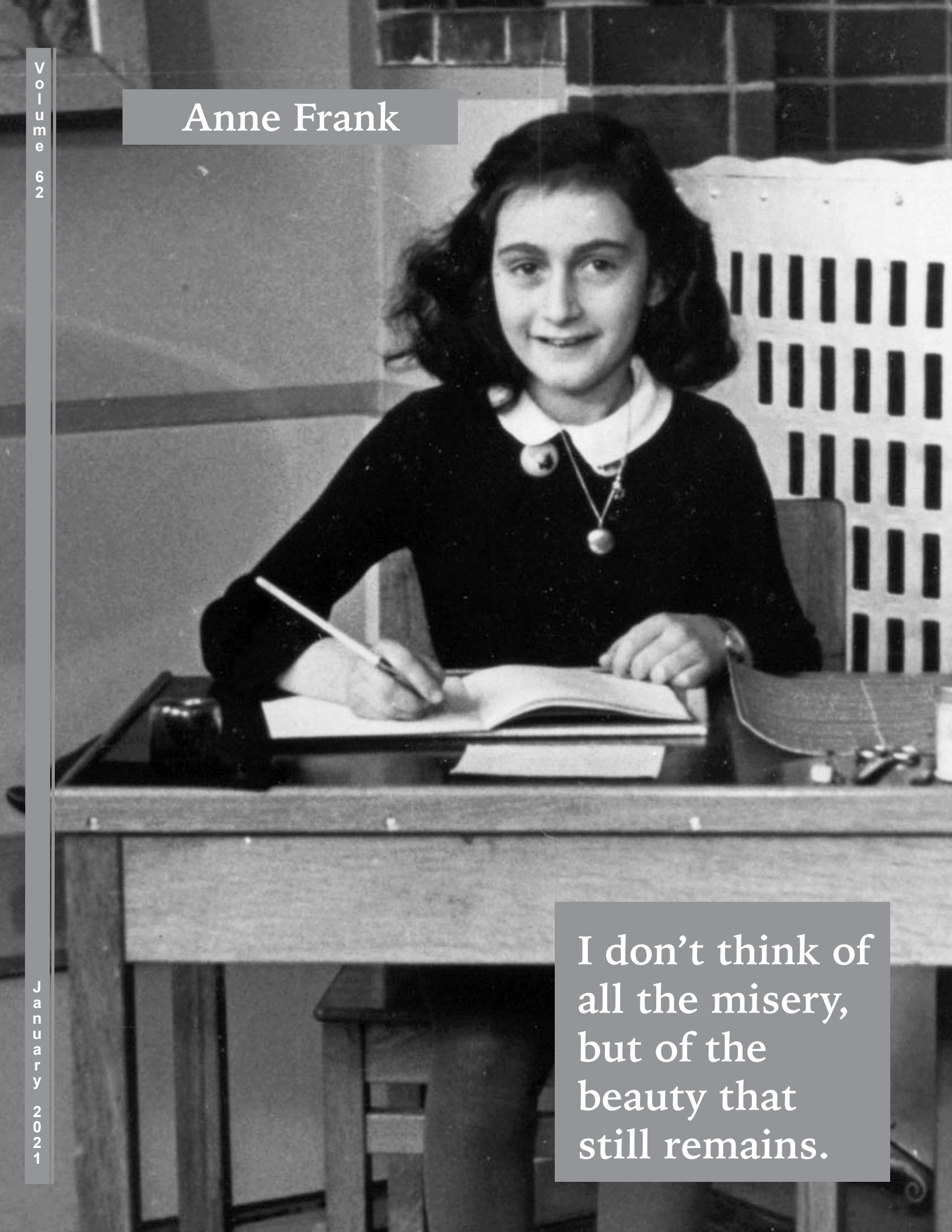
We Are Titans!

Respectfully,

Dr. Russ Sojourner
TCA President



Anne Frank



I don't think of
all the misery,
but of the
beauty that
still remains.