

THE LOOP

SEPT/OCT 2022



WORLDWIDE

Laura 41



We believe each one of us has the potential to shine light wherever we are, regardless of our circumstances. Through human connection, creativity, and mutual learning, we can unlock this potential in ourselves and maintain - even brighten - that light in ourselves and in our community. The more lights in the room, the brighter the collective light can shine, until the whole environment of prison is changed from the inside out.

The Loop is more than a magazine; it's how our community of light bearers communicates with each other. It's a source of belonging to something positive, creative inspiration, a reminder that we're not alone, a push to keep going, and a compass to guide the way. It can even be a touchpoint for meaningful connection with loved ones! *(Every issue can be viewed online at shining-light.com/theloop)*

If you are new to The Loop, we'd love to consider you part of the Shining Light community. The best way to do this is to mail in your responses or artwork to the address on the last page, so we have your name and address. Then, depending on the mailing system, we will start sending your own (free!) copy with your name on it. Anytime you're ready to join in our ongoing conversation, know that we're always glad to hear from you!

It is you - the readers and contributors - who make The Loop so special. Your stories of engagement with exercises and the impact it is having, your creativity and insight, and your willingness to invite your peers to subscribe, is what keeps momentum going.

We are selective in what we publish, however. As a community focused on unlocking the potential for good in each other, and even in the environments and systems we find ourselves in, all content is filtered through the "Community Codes" we seek to live by. These codes are sent to everyone who requests a copy of The Loop, and we encourage readers to refer to them often.

In addition, please review these guidelines so you know what we're looking for:

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- We will credit contributions with first name, last initial, and state, unless you clearly indicate otherwise.
- If you write anything in a letter that you do NOT want to be shared in The Loop or other Shining Light communications, please note that clearly.
- We reserve the right to edit your contribution as needed to fit space and/or theme.

CONTENT

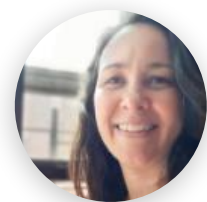
- Submissions should have a positive intention, which may include creative expression, encouraging words, or a constructive release of negative emotion.
- Remember to be inclusive of people of all faiths and backgrounds.
- Avoid details of your case and keep criticism of the institution/DOC constructive, focused on ways to create something better.

FORMATTING

- Write as legibly as possible (or type) so we can all read what you wrote!
- If possible, submit artwork and writings on blank paper.
- Be concise. Featured writings must fit legibly on 1 page. Responses to activities, questions, prompts, etc should be limited to a short paragraph or two so we can include more people!

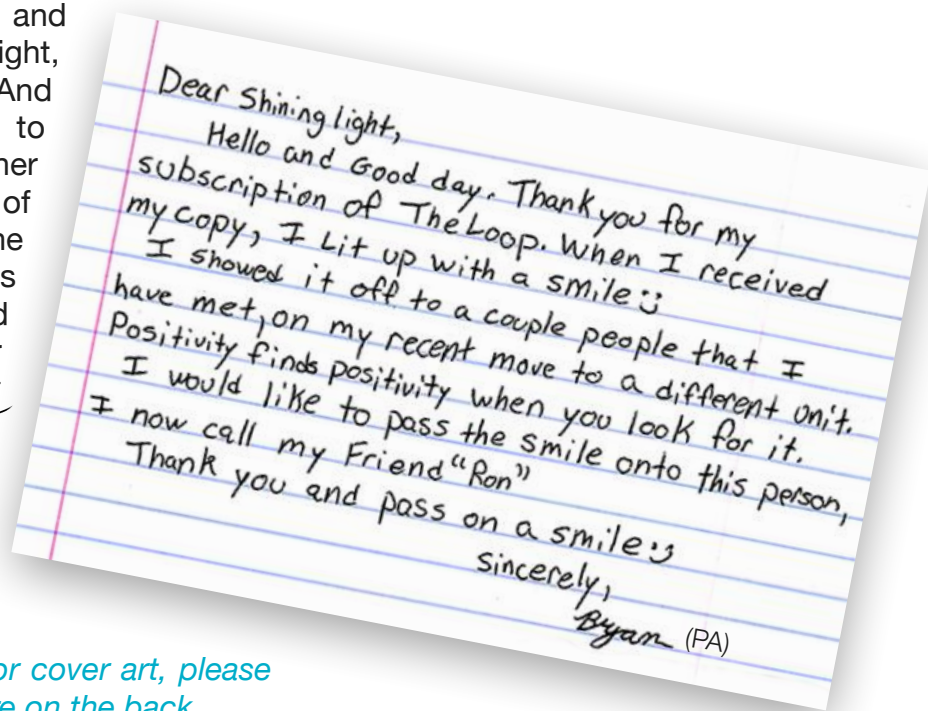
PLEASE NOTE: We are limited in the practical services we can provide at this time, and therefore cannot fulfill requests for legal or reentry support, penpal relationships, or assistance with publishing creative work.

IN THIS ISSUE: We'll be unpacking the character strength of **Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence**. I say "unpacking" because we recognize the weight these terms can carry, especially in the concrete and steel jungle of prison. But with the seasoned perspective of Ms. Naomi and the Horton brothers (p. 6-7) who served a combined 93 years inside, and insights from many fellow readers throughout the magazine, we will all be encouraged to see the possibilities for using this strength regardless of our present environment. Plus, the information provided by the VIA Institute opens up new definitions that can help us search for beauty and excellence where we may least expect it. We'll be asking, "Is beauty more than what the eyes can see?" What is it about (insert athlete or artist) that is so impressive to you? Have you ever been inspired by another's display of moral courage?



Kelly
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

The reality is, there is so much beauty and excellence within the people of Shining Light, in prisons and jails all across the country. And The Loop is a space where we get to appreciate it together and inspire one another through it! As you flip through the pages of this issue, make sure to check out the Broken & Beautiful Mosaic (p 8-9) and Jim's story in our Community Spotlight. And special thanks to Luke H. in Montana for the beautiful - and excellent - cover art! 😊



If you're a visual artist and have an idea for cover art, please send it in!!! Themes for upcoming issues are on the back.


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Look for the  that notes the various prompts and activities. Then write to us about your experience so we can keep the conversation going!

TO: YOU
FROM: JEFF

Greetings to “The Loop” community!

Thank you for all the letters and submissions for The Loop! It is great to hear from so many of you, see your creativity, and hear how the Loop community is growing and encouraging people in prisons across the US. Every letter and submission is read by several of us. While we can't use them all in The Loop and don't have resources to respond to everyone, please know that you are valued and appreciated for who you are and what you have to say.

We also hear of more and more groups of people meeting regularly to discuss The Loop. Kelly now has a discussion guide - let us know if you would like one. Maybe you can be the one to start an informal or even official “Loop Group” in your prison. Check out Page 10 to see what Jim has done in Ohio.

How the character strength “Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence” could be a part of prison life was not obvious for me when I started going inside. The combination of drab concrete surroundings, harsh metal gates, and strangers involuntarily crammed together did not seem to create a place where beauty and excellence would ever exist. Thick walls and deep pain were all I saw. However, as I got to know the people inside, I was awakened by what could be found.

I met people who were creating striking pieces of art; others did inspiring writings and music. The beauty was often in the depth and power of the message, regardless of their artistic skills. Beauty and excellence was also obvious in “small” actions that stood out in the environment: helping a peer, making the effort to do a job well, or just offering a smile with a warm greeting. I saw individuals making choices to go against the grain and rise above their situation, and it inspired me. Beauty and excellence are powerful in prisons.

But we can overlook the beauty and excellence that exists, wherever we are. In our SL Academy video-conference courses we start every class with the question, “What went right today?” At first, many struggle to find an answer. But as they start to hear what went right for others, they start to see their world differently and realize there's more to be thankful for than they thought. Attitudes and perspectives start to change in a positive way, and it becomes contagious.

Appreciating the Beauty and Excellence around us, wherever we are, is a challenge for all of us, whether in prison or not! I know I can get distracted by all kinds of things and forget to take stock of the goodness around me. May the following pages in this issue of The Loop help us develop new habits of noticing and appreciating the beauty and excellence in our everyday lives.

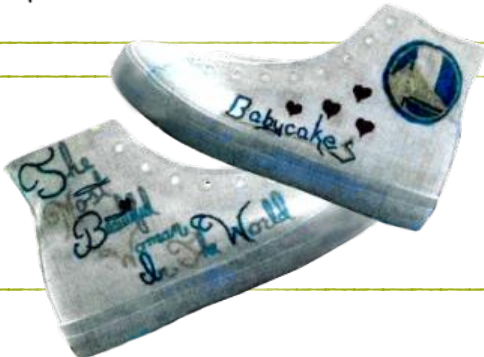


Jeff

FOUNDER &
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

For all daughters, sons, and wives, the need for love from fathers and husbands is irreplaceable and incomparable. They understand we are at a huge disadvantage financially being incarcerated. Its more about the unique way we show it that they can't get anywhere else. I encourage all inmates to find their creative way to do the same. It counts much more than we know.

Ramon (OH)



Ramon's unique way to show love to family, friends and peers inside is to embroider hats, shoes, even cloth masks. Here's what he said about this shoe he designed for his wife:

She is "the most beautiful woman in the world" and she is worth every second of the longest time it took to make these. LOL

PROGRAM UPDATES



WINTER ARTS COLAB

Congratulations to the following readers who've completed this inaugural writing mentorship!

- Illinois - Nicholas B
- Michigan - Robert N
- Minnesota - Jeremy M
- New York - Ronald C
- North Dakota - Doug G
- Ohio - Heather J, Marcus J, Harry James W, TW
- Pennsylvania - Leonard T, Shawn S, Larry S
- Washington - Felix L

Because this program went so well, we are offering another round! Check out the full announcement on page 18!!!

"I have never had any of my work published until I reached out to shining light. The winter arts coLab was amazing and a great experience. I got a certificate and showed others whom now want to do the same in an effort to be productive."

Felix/WA



TABLETS

Our brand new "Learn Your Strengths" Lab is available on Edovo!!! Ms. Naomi, Lee Horton, and a few other friends discuss the power of character strengths, how to identify them in yourself, draw them out in others, and develop them in the prison setting.



Take the course, tell your friends, and let us know what you discover!



SL ACADEMY

NORTH DAKOTA: Jeff, Travis, and Ms Naomi flew to ND in July for in-person ceremonies at NDSP and JRCC to honor 33 graduates of both facilities! New Academies, with a combined 34 participants, are underway.

BELMONT CI (OH): A 2nd group of 10 completed the SL Academy in July - congratulations! Everyone who graduated from the Academy will have a chance to keep meeting together as a "Loop Group."

SCI CHESTER (PA): Hats off to the 6 participants who persevered through various cancellations from lockdowns and administrative changes to finish the SL Academy in August!

Real Talk



Naomi

PROGRAM CONSULTANT

COMMUTED LIFER

COMMUTATION SPECIALIST

Appreciation and love of beauty is one of my strengths. I see the beauty in a lot of things. Things that people don't even think are beautiful and that I used to take for granted. Especially after being away for so long. My neighbors offer me food, they bring in my trash cans - it means something to me to know that someone cares enough for me to help out. That makes me appreciate them and I see the beauty in them and their kindness, because they don't have to do anything for me and they do.

I see beauty in my neighborhood when I see younger girls with babies and they're going to school and they're working and they're making it. I find the life and music of Le'Andria Johnson so beautiful. She's a gospel singer. And this young lady really had a rough time in life and she's doing excellent now. She went through the storm. I pay attention to those that are in the struggle and I'm inspired by them and find beauty in their stories.

ASK ANYTHING *And if I can't offer any advice, I'll ask someone who can!*

**Please note that while we will maintain a professional level of confidentiality, we are legally required to report any information that involves a serious threat or existence of harm to yourself or others.*

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

“How do you remain hopeful day after day?”

Knowing that you're not alone. Other people are going through things too, some that are worse than you can even imagine. You have to put your best foot forward and do the best you can and do the best with what you have.

“I've been in for 13 years with parole coming up but I'm stressed because I have write-ups. How can I handle being mad at myself for getting those writeups?”

I'm glad that you understand that you have no one to be upset with but yourself. You are prepared for that hit when you see the parole board, so what you need to do now is act like the person you can be and will be if you change your ways. And then do things - get involved in prison activities, programming, and then when you go back to see the board, you can show them you've made a dramatic change. It's up to you now. You can fix it.

“At my age of 61, with 40 years in prison, what good can I offer to be a part of society, and for my community?”

When I saw 61 years old... really? You're still a young chick. I'm 72! People love to hear stories from those that have walked that path. You're going to be an inspiration when people know who you are and where you came from and how much time you did. So, to want to come out and really help somebody is great. You can help so many people with just your presence. You've got a story to tell and surely some young people will be interested and you can help a lot of people.



LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL



Lee



Freedom

PROGRAM FACILITATORS / COMMUTED LIFERS & ACTIVISTS

Sometimes it takes losing something to appreciate the beauty and excellence we have in our lives. For us, this happened in 1993 when we lost our freedom. The gates closed, the lights dimmed, and everything we took for granted in life was gone from our reality. No taste, no smell, no touch, no feeling, no beauty. It was all gone. Yet as days and weeks turned into months, into years and decades, the deprivation and loneliness of imprisonment restored in us a profound appreciation of the beauty and excellence of life. It started off slow, our eyes lighting with amazement for small things: glimpses of flowers and trees, a bird floating in the sky, a spider racing across the floor. Then a visit from a relative brightened the day, or a song playing on the radio invoked joy. The smells of food cooking revitalized our spirit. Eventually just waking up each day was wonderful.

We came to realize that we were born into the most beautiful thing in the world: Life itself. A living masterpiece. We imagined ourselves as babies at the moment of birth when sounds and colors and objects flooded our brains for the first time. We knew nothing but experienced everything, and were somehow able to appreciate the beauty and excellence of it all. Crying, laughing, breathing, tasting, moving - the excitement of everything was magnificent at the start of our lives.

As years passed, however, the everyday stressors of living eclipsed our ability to appreciate the good that was all around us. Even before we found ourselves wrongfully in prison, we were being conditioned to only see what was wrong, not right. We walked fast, lived fast, talked fast, drove fast. We saw the forest but missed the trees, forgetting to taste the sweetness of its fruit, consuming only its bitter leaves.

Whether circumstances have kept you from experiencing beauty and excellence, or the pace of life has conditioned you not to see it anymore, we want to encourage you that it is still possible for you to say with amazement that, "Life is beautiful," and, "How fortunate am I to witness it?" Stop for a little while sometimes and let yourself appreciate the beauty and excellence of life you have been missing.



If finding the good in life is a struggle, we get it! Start small like we did. Try to notice and appreciate 1-5 good things a day, using as many senses as you can. What is one beautiful or excellent thing you can see, taste, smell, feel, and/or hear throughout your day?

More often than I'd like to admit, while on my walk to the chow hall, I become awe struck at the wide open view of the giant clouds in the sky. I then try to become angry because I'm seeing such a beautiful sky while in prison. The anger never manifests, as I'm imbued with amazement for the rest of the day.

Jerniah D
Ohio

CREATIVE CONNECTION

BROKEN & BEAUTIFUL

Last edition's prompt was, "Fill in the shape with whatever 'beauty' means to you."

FULL MURAL ON NEXT PAGE



FEELING SEEN & HEARD



Our next edition of The Loop will be coming to you in November, and the theme is Social Intelligence. To celebrate both the season of thankfulness and the year we've been through, I'd love to highlight moments from this year where someone else's social intelligence made an impact on you.


I think about social intelligence as a measurement of how someone can read themselves and other people. They're the people who seem to know what others might need or want without anyone telling them.

So for this mural, think of a moment when someone did something for you that mattered.

Draw a picture about that moment or experience. Sketch out the whole interaction if you want or just draw a symbol or representation of what the interaction was about. And if you'd like to provide a sentence for context, I'd love to include it in the mural I make from the submissions!

Here's my example:

My roommate went on a long trip recently, and before she left, she hid a bunch of notes for me to find. They were numbered & hidden anywhere and everywhere & they were delightful.




JENNY
CREATIVE SERVICES



BROKEN BEA

BROKEN & BEAUTIFUL

Family
Jeremiah

I selected purple to represent Domestic Violence Survivors and Victims
KARIN H



Marcus
Kara

I Love the relationship that I have with this Woman Named Kara. Simple Beauty is Strong & good Relationships.



THE Loop
Nights

Peace of Mind
Blowing
Civ
Sloves
Tastis
A Summer
Music



Beauty is:
Autumn leaves
A sunrise
A Bach concerto
A Prayer Time
A Letter
A Good book

"But the greatest of these is Love"



النساء
The Women

Beauty is Life For Life is Beauty,
Beauty is Freedom
Beauty is Art
Beauty is the degress of Love
Beauty is Peace
Beauty is Yin&yang
Beauty is Knowledge that equal Power
Beauty is the Fullness of Life
And the Harmony therein.



Last issue we were challenged to apply the strengths of Curiosity and Love of Learning in our relationships, especially when there are differences or conflict. With all that seeks to divide us today, things like kindness, peace, and unity can be a real struggle to find. But in most cases, it *is* possible, starting with each of us. Being “open” and “curious” - willing to adjust our attitude or preconceived notions - can help prevent us from jumping to conclusions and set us up to listen to the other person, to better understand their thoughts and feelings. The key is to see the other person as an individual human being, with their own experiences that have likely shaped their perspective.

Taking an interest in others’ cultural experiences, like this, can be a great place to start.



National Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept 15 - Oct 15) honors the achievements and contributions of Hispanic Americans who have inspired others to achieve success and enriched our society - athletes, entertainers, human rights activists, etc. Celebrations are often rich with food, music, dance, and other customs that represent the histories and cultures of these communities. A week-long observation began in 1968 under President Lyndon Johnson and was expanded to a month and set into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1988.

If your heritage is non-Hispanic, what is one way you can be “open” and “curious” toward this tradition and the people it represents?

Sonia Sotomayor
First Hispanic Supreme Court Justice

“It is important for all of us to appreciate where we come from and how that history has really shaped us in ways that we might not understand.”

**NOTE: “Hispanic” refers to one who originates from a Spanish-speaking country - Mexico, Spain, the Caribbean, and much of South- and Central America. Some populations in Latin America speak a language other than Spanish and therefore prefer the term Latinx/Latino(male)/Latina(female). Learn more at <https://www.hispanicheritagemoth.gov/>*



“Use words that build up & draw out the best in others (and yourself!)”

What does it mean to appreciate beauty and excellence in the context of community? One way to do this might be to literally tell others when you notice something around you that you find beautiful or inspiring. Sure, they might not see what you see, but speaking the words out loud may shift them away from a focus on the negative, and may even inspire them to look for their own examples.

Another way is to appreciate beauty or excellence in another person, and to share that with them. On page 6, Ms. Naomi described how this is a top strength of hers. She does this without even thinking about it, and countless people everywhere - inside and out - have been positively impacted by the way she calls out the goodness she sees in them.



Think of a time you were inspired to be the best version of yourself because someone took the time to tell you something good they recognized in you. Then go and do that for someone else! And don’t forget to let us know how it goes!

I See...

by Angela Marie Diaz

I look around and I see the color brown
 Lots of women sad and beaten
 I see souls that been ripped apart
 woman who need a brand new start
 I see cracks in the walls, dust on the floor
 CO's who just dont care anymore
 I see barbed wire fences and a locked gate
 Women holding in so much hate
 I see the same routine day after day
 the same disgusting food on my tray
 I then look deeper beyond the mess
 focus on what's in front of me a little less
 Now I see all the clouds in the sky
 the beautiful birds as they fly
 I see the wind blow through the tree's
 and the little mice looking back at me
 I see the smile the officer tries to hide
 and the love some carry inside
 I see an inmate helping the other
 one on the phone still trying to be a Mother
 They can't take away the freedom in our mind
 no matter what we were forced to leave behind



flowers



HARRY "JIM" WALKER, JR.

LONDON CORRECTIONAL
INSTITUTION
OHIO

Jim first discovered The Loop on his GTL tablet in October 2021. It wasn't until reading the second issue (Nov/Dec '21) - where Jeff shared about living with the hope that every life has purpose and meaning - that it started to click. ***"See, this is not my first time in prison. So I was really hard on myself, and I wasn't really thinking about changing or addressing my problems - I just wanted to go back home. But everything in there addressed what I was trying to search for in myself, trying to understand in myself and why I came back to prison... For a long time I didn't think my life mattered. But Shining Light was telling me that it does."***

This led Jim to subscribe to receive his own copy, and he began telling everyone how The Loop was having an impact on him, encouraging them to check it out for themselves. When the Winter Arts CoLab opportunity came up, he submitted a poem right away. The mentorship gave him confidence and motivated him to look for even more ways to be involved.

While Jim was exploring his character strengths and taking in the articles in The Loop, he also learned about a reentry program called **Horizon Prison Initiative** that seemed to have a lot of overlap. The goals of Horizon are to help each participant develop their faith or belief system, to learn to live in a functioning family, to contribute to the community, and to face the reality of what brought them to prison. This was a program he immediately wanted to be part of, so he applied and was thankfully accepted.

When Jim read the June/July/Aug '22 issue and saw what was happening with the "Let's Talk About The Loop" discussion group at Grafton CI - another facility in Ohio - he said, "How dare they do it without letting us do it?!" He continued, ***"The administration here are always open to new ideas and ways to help men change. When it's brought to them, and if it makes sense, they usually back it up and support it. So I immediately sent a letter to the warden."*** He also presented the idea to the directors of the Horizon program, who encouraged him and a fellow participant to draft a proposal for The Loop to be an elective class in the fall curriculum. The class was approved and is set to begin on September 15!

Jim did 32 years, the first time he was in prison. Coming back has been painful and humbling, but he is committed to transformation more than ever before, and is passionate about helping others avoid the same mistakes he made. ***"I worked on myself so much, but I would deny the one thing that ate me up the most, because I was so ashamed of it. And when I got home, it was that same addiction that brought me back... If you have a secret, or an addiction that you're too ashamed to admit - so much so that you never address it - that will bring you back to prison. If you don't wanna come back, deal with it... Deal with it."***

To fellow readers, here's Jim's final encouragement:

"This has been one of the greatest moments in my life, where I have discovered myself in this journey. My hope is that the men and women (even people who aren't incarcerated) would give The Loop a chance and let it make a difference in their lives, and perhaps create discussion groups all across the country!"

At Shining Light, we want to be a community that helps each other focus on the positive in the midst of the challenges and painful situations we can't avoid. (We're not ignoring the bad; we're just finding a way to rise above it!) This page is all about celebrating accomplishments and good news, so tell us...

In the last month I really have fallen back from a lot of the negativity on the Range, and started to become more productive doing Carey Guides & following up reading The Loop.
-Gilly - (OH)

"Building a ministry from ground up once I get out of prison."

David/PA

Back in the April/May issue I was in the PositiveneWS Section and I wrote about Perseverance and about being misconduct free for 18 months and Seeing Parole. Well after 5 yrs I did make parole and I am set to be released at the end of this month! That is Perseverance. I hope this encourages others to not give up!

Beau "mick" B. (PA)

I've worked diligently to be granted an opportunity to go from high security to a minimum security work re-entry unit. I have enrolled into Bible College & Seminary school that I can do here in prison through the mail. My wife, whom has a physical disability, has sought out & begun to participate in a stretching & exercising routine in a great gym.

Luxe (MT)

"My good news was that an attorney has agreed to take my case before the parole board. My accomplishment is that the Justice Arts Coalition has asked to publish a piece of my art and a poem."

Gary/SC

I accomplished getting published in The Loop and I'm excited about the next subscription
-Nights (PA)

Since I've been locked up my life has changed dramatically due to covid-19 and the pandemic. I find it comforting that I practice my Religion and stay true to my faith and help others!

-TJ (Ohio)

I've been granted a court date to look at my legal issues after 26 years of incarceration. Hopefully, I'm granted some relief from this life sentence.

Larry (PA)

"A job in deer lodge prison"

Jarrat/MT

"I'm gonna be a grandma!"

Anonymous/VA

I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP DONATE 100 POUNDS OF HONEY TO THE LOCAL FOOD BANK! CONTRIBUTING TO THE COMMUNITY IS SUCH A SWEET FEELING :)

Jermiah (OH)

I can now proudly say that I have done something positive and productive and being the only one in a while to get her G.E.C. I hope I can motivate more women to follow in my steps. My next move is to get into Northwestern College. We are all capable of becoming A Success story.

Jenie (IL)

"I got a job in the kitchen and am enrolled in JumpStart it is a blessing."

Chris/SC

"I've earned over 260 certificates on the Edovo platform on my tablet."

Anonymous/AZ

"I got a release date!!!!!"

Victor/AZ

WHAT WENT RIGHT?

- What accomplishments are you proud of?
- What good news are you excited about?
- Are you or someone you know coming up on your release date?

My little brother who is also locked up, goes home next month. I published a book on Amazon, which reassures me that I can be prolific even in this circumstance.
- Marcus (OH)

I can honestly say I've had many accomplishments during prison my most is only being 8 credits from my associates degree in Liberal Arts.

And I am excited after almost 18 years of being locked up I am getting a chance to go to a work release program!
- Tammy E (IL)

"I haven't seen my children in seven years, they brought a program called Proverbs 22:6 ministries, I give God all the glory, he softened there GMA's heart and even though they are now 18 & 17 they still want to see me and THEY ARE COMING."

Anonymous/NC

I met a man who spoke of so many uplifting and positive things. He is 65 and was just paroled after serving 40 years of a life sentence. I asked him for tips on how to make my next 3 years 10 months to go by with ease. He said "Look through the fence, not at the fence!" Those words will stay with me for the rest of my life and I've already started looking through the fence!

Frankie D. (OH)



STRENGTH SPOTTING

As a reminder, strength spotting is when you notice, describe, and appreciate situations where someone uses one of the character strengths. Similarly, using the strength of Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence is all about taking a moment to notice and really

appreciate the goodness one sees in their day. With this crossover, I thought it may be fun to use strength spotting to appreciate the beauty and excellence in these stories below.

*Take a moment to envision these interactions where curiosity & love of learning were used.
Notice how reading these stories makes you feel.*

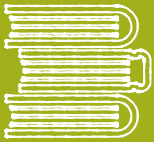


A younger resident in my building was in the dayroom working on her math homework. She was struggling with the word problems so she asked one person for help. While they were assisting, another person came to help. Before we knew it there was 5 of us around the table working through these math problems! It was Great! We not only helped the original learner - each of us also learned from each other that day - Chanel (PA)



“There was this young officer who would always stop if an individual called him. Not like other officers that tended to be too busy to stop most times, this officer would lend his ear even if it was just to converse. I asked why and how is that not annoying? The response was that understanding that the individual may just need to be heard, and that could put that person in a better mood, worked better than ignoring those with inquiries or that just want to be heard. Also the living unit seems a lot more peaceful from what I see, so I started to adopt this thinking in the paradigm shift to being a better man.”

Anonymous tablet user (WA)



A neighbor of mine who happens to be two cells down was reading a book I was working on. Of course it needed some editing but he was intrigued by the little he did read. It inspired him to want to write about his own life as well. He asked me for some pointers on how to begin. I told him honestly I don't know what I'm doing, I just write how I feel and it comes to life on paper. My neighbor then began writing his own book, but before doing so, he would constantly read countless books from different Authors. Before you knew it, he had grasped the concept of writing from all the books he would read. When he was finally done writing his book, it was as if I was reading a James Patterson book (L.O.L)... Kaylee (OH)



AT OUR FACILITY I ENJOYED WATCHING AND LISTENING TO OUR EDUCATION CLASS AS THEY USED A GARDEN TO STIMULATE BOTH CURIOSITY AND LOVE OF LEARNING. NOTHING LIKE GROWING AND TASTING NEW VEGETABLES TO SPARK INTEREST WHILE LEARNING. GIVES A NEW FLAVOR TO THEIR CLASSROOM AS WELL AS THE SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT.

JAKE (ND)



For the next issue, tell us where you spot people around you using Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence.

VIA DEFINITION: APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY & EXCELLENCE

“Those who express an appreciation of beauty & excellence notice and appreciate beauty, excellence and/or skilled performance in all domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience.

People high in Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence are responsive to these three types of goodness:

PHYSICAL BEAUTY

This may include auditory, tactile or abstract. This type of goodness produces awe and wonder in the person experiencing it.

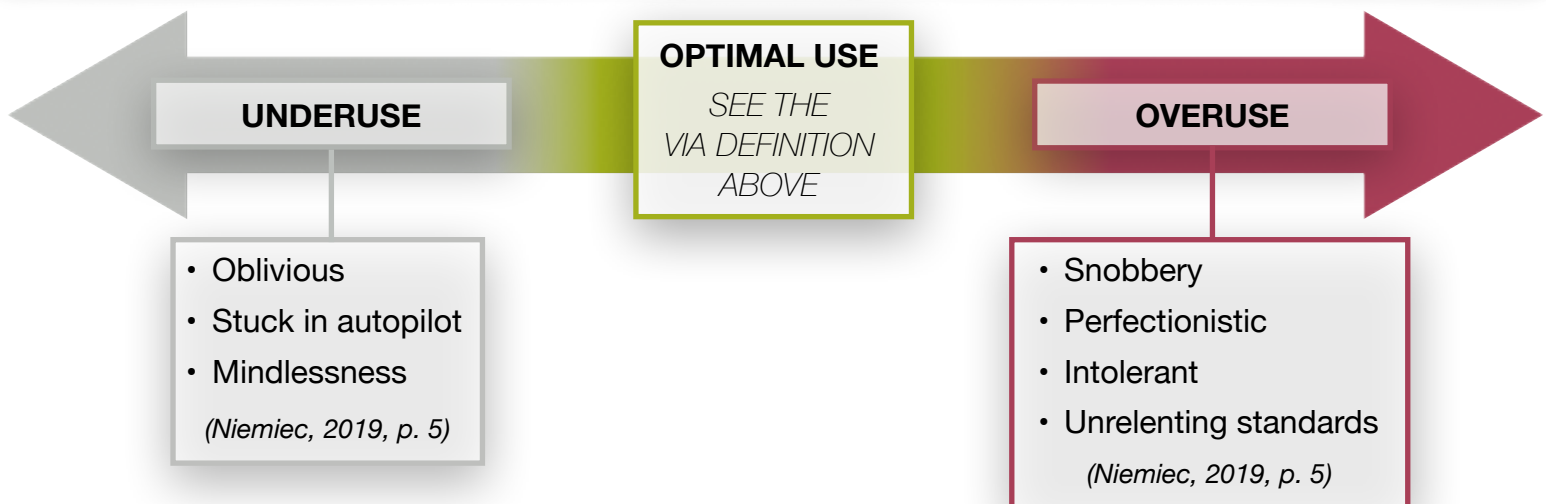
SKILL OR TALENT (EXCELLENCE)

This is often energizing, and compels a person to pursue their own goals. It inspires admiration.

VIRTUE OR MORAL GOODNESS (MORAL BEAUTY)

Virtuous goodness makes someone want to be better, more loving and creates feelings of elevation.”

<https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths/appreciation-of-beauty-and-excellence>



A keyword that I notice in the definition of this strength is the word *responsive*. When this strength is expressed, it is not only about noticing beauty & excellence, it is also about responding in a way that evokes feelings and/or specific action. For example, some days when I see a sunrise I just notice it and move on. Then there are days where I apply this strength by taking a deep breath and really appreciating the sun rising to start a new day. This may look different for you - maybe you say something out loud to express appreciation, write something about what you notice, or just feel a burst of energy to get your day started.



Travis
PROGRAM DEVELOPER

Think of a recent time when you noticed physical beauty, excellence, or moral beauty as described in the definition above. With this in mind...



- How can you express Appreciation for the Beauty & Excellence you noticed?
- How might your response look different if you were underusing this strength? If you were overusing it?

APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY & EXCELLENCE: IN PRACTICE

Diving deeper into understanding Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence caused me (Travis) to learn more about the emotion of “elevation.” You will notice it in the third type of goodness described on page 15 as virtuous or moral beauty. Elevation has been defined as the warm, motivating feeling you have when someone does something really good for others (☆1). Not just an act of kindness that deserves a pat on the back or a thumbs up, but an over-the-top act of kindness that is more rare or unexpected. Can you think of an example of an over-the-top act of kindness you saw or experienced?

An interesting aspect of this emotion is that study after study have shown that the feeling of elevation causes those acts of kindness to be contagious (☆2). Meaning, when someone sees a rare act of kindness, they are more likely to do something kind themselves.

Have you ever experienced this yourself or witnessed it before? If so, what happened?

How could this cycle of kindness and elevation impact your unit or floor?

Jake (ND) sees Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence in this way:

COMPLETE AND TOTAL PASSION OF THE FACE OF A PERSON WHEN YOU TOUCH UPON A TOPIC THEY LOVE. THE BEAUTY IS IN THE LIGHT IN THEIR EYES, IN THE EXAGGERATED MOTIONS, AND EXPRESSIONS THAT THEY AREN'T EVEN AWARE THEY ARE DOING. IT'S CONTAGIOUS AND INFECTIOUS EVEN IF IT ISN'T YOUR PASSION AT ALL. YOU FEEL THE EMOTIONS. YOU TRAVEL, JUST FOR A MOMENT, THE RAGING RIVER OF THEIR FEELINGS. IF THERE EVER WAS BEAUTY IN THE SPAWN OF AN IDEA, IT IS AMPLIFIED BY THE PASSION OF THE PERSON WHO LOVES THE IDEA.

JAKE

To practice Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence, my challenge is for you to take some time savoring goodness you dismissed over the course of the last day. Maybe it was a song, a display of talent or skill, something in nature, an art piece you saw, or an act of moral goodness. It's not too late to gain the benefits of appreciating that good thing!



Try this exercise below - see how it makes you feel and let us know how it goes! (☆3)

STEP 1: Pause and reflect on the past 12-24 hours and recognize when you saw something that was good. (If helpful, re-read the definition from the previous page.)

STEP 2: Write down and describe what you remember.

STEP 3: Write down how it made you feel in that moment and/or if it caused you to take a certain action.

STEP 4: Write down how you feel in this current moment.

STEP 5: How might this exercise prompt you to appreciate goodness differently moving forward?

☆1 - Pohling, R., & Diessner, R. (2016). Moral elevation and moral beauty: A review of the empirical literature. *Review of General Psychology*, 20(4), 412-425.

☆2 - Sparks, A. M., Fessler, D. M., & Holbrook, C. (2019). Elevation, an emotion for prosocial contagion, is experienced more strongly by those with greater expectations of the cooperativeness of others. *PLoS one*, 14(12), e0226071.

☆3 - Niemiec, R. M. (2018). *Character strengths interventions: A field guide for practitioners*. Hogrefe Publishing.



HEALTH & WELLNESS



WORKOUT MIX TAPE!

You've been waiting, and here it is - 75 minutes of your favorite songs to get moving to! These songs lined up with our community codes of speaking life (we tried to keep it clean!) AND speaking from the "I", because sometimes you gotta tap into those big feelings to fuel you past your obstacles. **Studies have also found listening to music while working out can improve the workout and your mood while doing it!** (☆1)

TITLE	ARTIST	CONTRIBUTOR
Work	Rihanna, Drake	Kasheyon L.C. (PA)
Eye of the Tiger	Survivor	"Night" (PA) / Larry S. (PA)
Arlandria	Foo Fighters	Christopher N. (AZ)
Gonna Make You Sweat (Everybody Dance Now)	C & C Music Factory	George E. (PA)
Nirvana - HEADER Remix	A7S, HEADER	Ryan H. (MT)
Zombie	The Cranberries	Luke H. (MT)
Impossible	Lacey Sturm	"Rabbit" (PA)
Fake A Smile (feat. salem ilese) - K-391 Remix	Alan Walker, salem ilese, K-391	Ryan H. (MT)
Pump Up The Jam	Technotronic	George E. (PA)
Colossus	Avatar	"D" (MI)
Somebody	Memphis May Fire	"Rabbit" (PA)
Everything	TobyMac	Jorge V.M. (AZ)
Hero	Skillet	"Rabbit" (PA)
Stronger (feat. Kesha) - Club Mix	Sam Feldt, Kesha	Ryan H. (MT)
Flesh Into Gear	CKY	"Gilly" (OH)
I Was Made For Lovin' You (feat. Nile Rodgers & House Gospel Choir)	Oliver Heldens, Nile Rodgers, House Gospel Choir	Ryan H. (MT)
Dímelo	Marc Anthony	Kasheyon L.C. (PA)
Oracle	Timmy Trumpet	Ryan H. (MT)
Tuyo	Social Club Misfits, Danny Gokey, Jordin Sparks	Kasheyon L.C. (PA)
Angels	Fatum	Ryan H. (MT)
HARD LOVE (feat. Lauren Daigle)	NEEDTOBREATHE, Lauren Daigle	Kasheyon L.C. (PA)

Don't forget to warm-up, cool-down, and give it your all!

(☆1) <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/why-music-moves-us/201301/music-and-exercise-what-current-research-tells-us#:~:text=It%20can%20increase%20physical%20capacity,of%20music%20has%20definite%20limits.>



What's working for you?

SEND US ANY PRACTICES YOU USE TO HELP YOU CARE FOR YOURSELF OR PEOPLE AROUND YOU.



Rachel

PROGRAM
COORDINATOR

In the last issue, Tammy E (IL) inspired the prompt: "How have you turned a negative into a positive?" Marcus J (OH) shared what we often hear from many of our readers:

I have whole heartily committed to using this time in prison to become a better man. This will not be wasted time and I will not sit idle, I will continue to explore ways to be productive while I'm in prison.
Marcus

One of the ways that Marcus explored his productivity was to be involved in our **Winter Arts CoLab**. Marcus and his mentor Michael worked on refining his poem "Holding Back the Tears." In one exchange he wrote:

"This workshop gave me a chance to take a poem I wrote while I was in pain and hopelessness and add a fresh perspective on it. Now this poem births light, life, strength, and hope. And if it was not for this workshop, I never would have turned this 'dark cloud' poem into a 'blue skies' poem."

Now YOU have the opportunity to explore your own productivity through our next CoLab!



WINTER ARTS
CoLAB

You're invited to participate in a creative mentorship opportunity to explore, refine and polish a creative piece of your choosing. After three months of back-and-forth with a trained professional, you will receive a certificate, letter, and your piece will automatically be submitted to Shining Light for potential publication. Whether you're an experienced creator or just dabbling, this mentorship is for anyone who wants to further explore their creative voice!

THINGS TO NOTE

- You do not need a finished piece to start. Even something as small as an idea is enough for this mentorship!
- Thematically, you are welcome to submit anything that supports the values of SL, as represented in the Community Codes and Submission Guidelines (p2)
- You may use either of the following communication methods:
 - **JPay:** Send a JPay email request to rachel@shining-light.com
 - **Mail:** Write to Shining Light % Rachel T., P.O. Box 8606, La Verne, CA 91750

*If you'd like to participate in our next Winter Arts CoLab mentorship, please send us a "letter of intent" with the following info **BY NOVEMBER 1:***

1. Name/ID & Facility
2. Type of piece: poem short story short play song other/unsure
3. Brief summary of the piece or idea
4. What you hope to gain from the experience

Once your letter is received, Rachel will follow up with more information about the Winter Arts CoLab process, and what you can expect!

"Have you seen the new pictures of the James Webb telescope from the living creation of our loving Creator?!?! I haven't! I wish I could though. Hint! Hint! ;)"

Jorge/AZ

"COSMIC CLIFFS" IN THE CARINA NEBULA



SOUTHERN RING NEBULA



CARTWHEEL GALAXY



The James Webb telescope was developed by NASA over the course of 30 years, in partnership with the European Space Agency and the Canadian Space Agency. Considered the successor to the Hubble telescope, it uses infrared technology to be able to see much clearer images from much farther away. Because light takes time to travel, and the images captured by the Webb telescope are said to be about 13.6 billion light-years away, scientists are now getting humanity's closest look at what is believed to be the first galaxies to ever exist in the universe.

What do you find beautiful about these images?

What strikes you as excellent?

What kind of response does this evoke in you?

● *To help you respond by connecting with your Creator...*

- 1 Find a comfortable position and take a few deep breaths in and out. Be mindful of your lungs expanding, relax your shoulders and massage the muscles in your face. When you're ready - on an exhale, say to yourself "I am here."
- 2 As you continue to breathe, think about the beauty and excellence of God reflected in these images - the glory and greatness of a Creator who existed since the beginning of time. On an exhale, say to God "You were there."
- 3 Consider, as you breathe, that this God who created time and space also created you. God knows your name and cares about you more than any star in the sky. Galaxies may be billions of miles away, but God is close to you. When you're ready - on your last exhale, say to God "You are here."
- 4 With a recognition of God's presence with you, as the one who created you, loves you, and knows you best, invite God to speak to you. Remember to breathe in and out as you wait to hear God's voice.



CONSTRUCTIVE DEBATE




Angelina

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

Welcome to our Constructive Debate Team! One sign of a healthy community or relationship is the ability to disagree respectfully. We want to provide a chance for you to share your differing ideas in a safe, constructive way and practice critical thinking, hearing different perspectives, and carefully crafting a respectful argument. Life throws us situations where we need these skills all the time, so think of this as your practice ground.

Last edition we proposed the statement below and asked if you agreed or disagreed with it. Here's what our team of thinkers had to say:

AGREE

DEPENDS

DISAGREE

Yes, every human has a purpose but everyone lives out their purpose in different ways based on internal and external influences. A life cut short early or one limited by trauma has purpose but may not be fully realized. However, as Viktor Frankl writes in *Man's Search for Meaning*, purpose exists and can be found even in the most horrific circumstances. That is our challenge.

Keith (PA)

"I agree, every human life has a purpose. God gave us all a purpose, some to affect change in others."

- Brenda/TX

"Totally agree. Unsure to whether this could include all living beings, as bees have a duty to pollinate, trees have a way of giving us the great air, now as to human life and all humans having a purpose, I would say that each human being has to find their own purpose to live or passion to fulfill something meaningful. Although I will say this- regardless, we shall all love and respect human life and strive to better one another."

- Felix/WA

While I intensely believe that every human life does serve a purpose, I must contend that this does not mean that every human life is meant for anything more than mediocrity. The sad fact is that most people in this world are content with a dull and unfulfilling life. At the end of the day it is up to us to break free from our mundane existence and become someone greater than we are now. In doing so our purpose in life will become something extra ordinary.

RYAN (MT)

"THERE IS A PURPOSE TO EVERY HUMAN LIFE ON THE PLANET."

Being LGBTQ in prison is no cake walk. Aside from the usual stress that incarceration brings, LGBTQ inmates face additional anxiety perpetuated by staff and fellow inmates. While gay rights may have a foothold in the "real world," prison society is many years behind in acceptance of the LGBTQ community.

The tragic incidents of police brutality and mass shootings all across our nation have given a new impetus to *Lives Matter*. ALL lives matter. Black, Hispanic, LGBTQ, children, elderly- the value of human life and dignity of every sentient being on the planet must be held in the undeniable truth that we are created in God's image. Whether your idea of God is Jehovah, Allah, Buddha or perhaps no deity at all, life is sacred. It is a treasured gift.

Gary (SC)

"I do believe there is a purpose for every life. I also believe that we may never know what our purpose in life is. I only know that no matter how many mistakes you've made, unless you're dead you still have time to make your purpose a good thing. So I believe you have control over what your purpose is and how it affects others."

- Bradley/AZ

I'm gonna say it depends on the person's will. Are they gonna play the cards life dealt them or fold?

- Gilly - (OH)

(please note: some answers have been abridged for space)

FOR OUR NEXT EDITION, WE WANT TO KNOW...

DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT AND WHY:



**“IT’S OK TO WALK AWAY FROM A RELATIONSHIP,
EVEN IF THE OTHER PERSON IS STRUGGLING.”**

**Send us a few sentences & keep our
Community Codes in mind, especially:**

- Speak life
- Share ideas, not ID's
- Speak from the “I”

WE CAN’T WAIT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

HOLIDAYS/SPECIAL EVENTS COMING UP:

September 11th - Patriot Day / National Day of Service & Remembrance | After the terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center in 2001, Congress designated September 11th as “Patriot Day.” Since then, people all over the country have united in efforts to honor the 2,977 innocent lives lost by participating in service activities in their communities. So aside from taking a moment to reflect, consider how to serve those around you.

<https://americorps.gov/911-day>

Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur | Rosh Hashanah is considered the Jewish New Year, commemorating the creation of the world. Loved ones often gather to share a meal and recite prayers of gratitude for the past year and petitions for a prosperous year to come. It also begins a 10-day period of introspection and repentance that culminates in the Yom Kippur holiday, also known as the Day of Atonement. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the two “High Holy Days” in the Jewish religion.

<https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/rosh-hashanah-history>

<https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/yom-kippur-history>

October 10th | “Columbus Day arose out of a late 19th century movement to honor Italian American heritage at a time when Italian immigrants faced widespread persecution. But the holiday has since come under fire as a celebration of a man whose arrival in the Americas heralded the oppression of another group of people: Native Americans. In recent decades, it has been replaced by Indigenous Peoples’ Days in many states and cities.”

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/why-some-celebrate-indigenous-peoples-day-not-columbus-day>

Is it possible to honor both Italian Americans and Native Americans on the same holiday?

REMEMBER
SEPT 11

ROSH HASHANAH
SEPT 25-27

YOM KIPPUR
OCT 4-5

**COLUMBUS DAY/
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE’S DAY**
OCT 10

GAMES & ACTIVITIES

APPLES
AUTUMN
BIRDS
BLANKET
BONFIRE
CHANGING
CIDER
COLORFUL
COZY
CROW
DECIDUOUS
EQUINOX
FLANNEL
FOLIAGE
FROST
HARVEST
HAYRIDE
JACKET

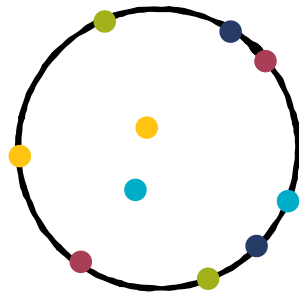
LEAVES
MIGRATE
ORCHARDS
PUMPKIN
QUILT
RAKE
RUSTLING
SCARECROW
SEASON
SPIDER
SQUASH
SQUIRREL
SUNFLOWER
SWEATER
TREES
VEGETABLES
WHEELBARROW

FALL WORDSEARCH

Q L W E J M E D I R Y A H K Z B N U T C V P
H N P G I B T S C U E T S O R F D R O S A M
R B S A Z D E P Q N J W I V G X T L E K F H
Y Q U I L T K J F U B H O A E C O L Q D B S
A K X L C V N R E D I P S L M R B H U Z I F
V W D O E J A P B G Z R Q H F A S M I T Y C
M O G F T W L E V S N B R U T N I A N P H Q
X R V R A K B Z J C H I L E P B U F O G W N
T C E J R H S A U Q S Y G W L K O S X H D M
D E H A G L I U M T F E B N O S R N E J P U
S R J C I Q P N O H V L U C A D M E F O K T
G A F K M J D L T U C S E O N H L P B I X U
U C R E T A E W S P D F M Z I B C O H N R A
J S M T P N F C Z R O I W Y A Q H D I L U E
I D Y U N S E V A E L Z C R H P O K M Q S B
B Z R A K E Q H D M X N R E S J P I C E T O
E I L S H Y C B G U K O P T D M F L A R L Z
P F R Q Y R O T X Z W J N B U L A S E M I D
W X B D O J H A R V E S T P C I O Q Y S N L
L H Z M S I J F W O R C A Q Y N K B P U G X

CAN YOU SOLVE THIS LOGIC PUZZLE?

Connect the colored dots to their pair
without overlapping any lines!



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you find all
8
differences between
these pictures?

Balloon rides in the Capadoccia region of Turkey are said to be one of the most breathtaking experiences in the world. Volcanic rock that has eroded over time has created some of the most unique geological features, and Fall is a popular time for people to go explore them.



WHAT WE'RE READING



EDUCATED // BY: TARA WESTOVER
GARY / SC

THE BEST RESOURCE GUIDE FOR PRISONERS
BY: MIKE ENEGMIO
ANONYMOUS / NC

MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING
BY: VIKTOR E. FRANKL
KEITH / PA

HOW TO WIN FRIENDS & INFLUENCE PEOPLE
BY: DALE CARNEGIE
MARK / PA

**JUST
FOR
FUN**



The most leaves raked in one minute by an individual is 34.667 lbs and was achieved by David Rush in Boise, Idaho, on 6 November 2017.

David made his successful record-breaking attempt to promote STEM education and the "Rake up Boise" volunteer event. Thousands of Boise residents came out to rake the lawns of the elderly and disabled in their community.

Doodles of the bored..



Watch the escargot
Jrandlee - OH



MS. NAOMI'S CORNY CORNER

WE KNOW YOU CAN'T HELP YOURSELVES

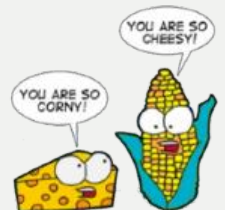
I once stayed up all night to figure out where the sun went... and then it dawned on me.

*Which animal is least trustworthy?
Cheetahs.*

*What did the vinaigrette say to the refrigerator?
Close the door! Can't you see!? I'm dressing!*

Did you hear about the snowman who got upset when the sun came out? He really had a total meltdown.

*How did the barber win the race?
He knew a shortcut.*





KEEP THE COVER ART COMING!

CHECK OUT THE THEMES BELOW FOR INSPIRATION

UPCOMING THEMES

NOV/DEC '22
SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

JAN/FEB '23
BRAVERY

MAR/APRIL '23
FORGIVENESS/HUMILITY

Social intelligence is essentially an understanding of the feelings and motives of one's self and others. It combines an awareness of these things with the ability to know what to do in response, and leads to an ability to fit into different social situations.

How can social intelligence be a useful strength during the winter holiday season?



SUBMISSIONS FOR NEXT EDITION DUE BY OCT 10



SPECIAL THANKS TO THE 68 PEOPLE WHO SUBMITTED & THESE 41 CONTRIBUTORS:

COVER ART:
Luke H. (MT)

FEATURED WRITING:
Angela Marie D. (PA)

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT:
Harry "Jim" W. Jr. (OH)

OTHER REFLECTIONS & RESPONSES:
[AZ] Bradley S., Christopher N.,
Jorge V.M., Victor Z.
[IL] Jenie L., Tammy E.
[MI] D.

[MT] Jarrat S., Luke H., Ryan H.
[ND] Jake

[OH] Frankie D., Gilly, Jeremiah D., Kayree J.,
Marcus J., Ramon R., T.J. R.

[PA] Beau "Mick" B., Bryan R., Chanel W., David K.,
George E., Kasheyon L.C., Keith P.,
Larry S., Mark M., Night, Rabbit, Victoria R.

[SC] Chris C., Gary F.

[TX] Brenda V.

[WA] Felix L.

4 Anonymous Tablet Submissions from
AZ, NC, VA & WA

Through **edovo** more and more people are accessing *The Loop* and engaging in other video content, too. If you have Edovo on your tablets, be sure to check out our channel and tell your friends!

IF YOU ENJOYED THIS ISSUE OF THE LOOP...

Tell your friends to look it up!

Write to us with your feedback, responses, writing, or artwork

Check out Shining Light's video-based courses

Share your experience with loved ones on the outside and invite them to read *The Loop* online at shining-light.com/theloop

I just read my first issue of The Loop on my tablet (June-July-Aug). And now I'm hooked. In short I would love to become part of your community.

-L.J. (OH)