Jasalynn Lua discovers the power of positive expression through art

■ PATRICK SHELBY
Managing Editor

MABTON — An aura of artistry and compassion beams from Jasalynn Lua's eyes when she softly speaks about her grandma Rosa.

She's the powerful source of confident inspiration the 14-year-old draws upon to saturate the pages of her sketchbook with an abundance of meaningful imagery.

Pencils, color markers and intimate drawing pads resembling personal journals are kept close at hand, which note her depth of vibrant feelings for creating acrylic artworks with a contemporary vision.

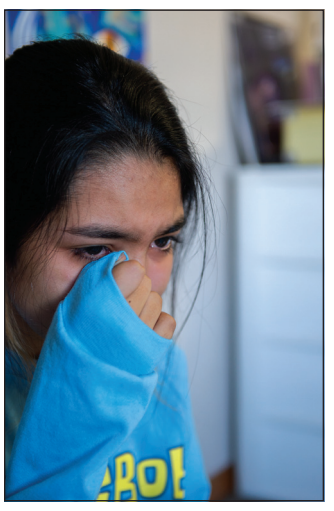
The Grandview High School student is passionate about 'doodling,' the word she uses to describe her detailed depiction of an idea or thought from a dream, and even the experience of a nightmare.

"As I've been getting older, like things start to stress you out a lot more and for me, throughout all this quarantine and eighth grade, it stressed me out a lot. Throughout my free time, I would just draw how I felt," Lua expressed during an interview on Wednesday, Feb. 3.

During the weekday, she typically awakens shortly before attending her online classes which begin at 8 a.m. and go until 2 p.m.

"It's a little confusing and stressful," the oldest of the three conveyed. Once school is over, Lua logs back onto the computer to complete her daily homework assignments and finishes up her school day.

"It can be very distracting when you're learning at home because of like all the people in your household but I focus more on my studying and getting things done," she acknowledged.



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TEARS OF GRATITUDE — Jasalynn becomes emotional as she expresses her grandma Rosa's guiding influence in her life.

Lua has two brothers, ages 11 and nine, who always have questions that require her to help them with their Zoom studies, and can also be disruptively loud at times, the freshman giggled.

One of the main qualities she values about high school is the variety of subjects taught and the opportunity to further develop her social and professional communication skills while trying to overcome her shyness, Lua expressed.

When the Lua family moved out from Grandma Rosa's house in Grandview after purchasing their house in Mabton last June, the aspiring artist was allowed to claim the upstairs room which doubles as her own studio and gallery over the garage.

She now has her own private space and has learned how to use the quarantine time beyond the virtual learning to freely create and grow her artistic abilities. "In my room I would just doodle different designs and things like that," Lua described. "I can definitely see a change in my artwork between the years."

The stream of illuminating light from the distinctive upper window reflects with symbolic meaning like Grant Wood's painting entitled, "American Gothic." The interior walls are filled with regional sunshine and panels of colorful imagery that Lua has faithfully painted.

"At first, I remember I asked my mom, do you think I can maybe draw or paint something on the walls, but I think she took it as like, do I want the walls a different color," she recalled in September.

When Lua started to draw on the walls, her mom returned home from work and witnessed firsthand what her daughter meant.

She asked her, 'what are you doing on the walls?' Lua replied, "I'm drawing on them. I don't have any canvasses."

Her mom responded, 'when did I tell you that you could do that?' Lua realized she was teasing, and her mom said, 'it was fine.'

Both parents were onboard as she drew and then painted directly onto her bedroom walls and encouraged her to permanently exhibit the visual collection as part of the family's forever home.

Lua's art process begins on paper, she said. "I will just doodle something and then an idea comes to my mind. The idea eventually grows and gets bigger." Once she decides the artwork is a 'good idea' for display, it's sketched out directly onto the wall. After the piece is finished and she's happy with the design, color is added at the end.

"I feel like art has a lot of emotion behind it. There's so much hidden meaning in a piece of artwork than the artist puts out," Lua explained.

The importance of art for the ninth-grade student is all about being able to express herself even though others may not understand. It's difficult for her to verbalize 'heavy' emotions but through art, she has discovered her voice.

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ARTIST'S RETREAT — 14-year-old Jasalynn Lua, Grandview High School freshman, discovers her voice through 'doodling' and acrylic artwork exhibited from the walls of the second-story loft.

"It helps a lot like to draw and just get away from reality for a little bit and to explore your imagination on paper. I feel art can be a therapy sometimes too. And it's really important to those who don't, well to me, because I don't express my emotions very well," Lua eloquently mused.

One theme she has doodled on paper, which has significant meaning for her is the point-of-view from the top of a rose. The flower stands for her grandma, she replied. The petals open up and some of them appear to float away. There are little whimsical fairies emerging out from inside the protective petals.

"My grandmother is sick. The rose is her; she's still here, she's still healthy," Lua tenderly disclosed. The lively pixies symbolize her grandma's personality, she tearfully acknowledged.

"I think teens my age, a lot of kids don't know how to really talk or have someone to talk to about feelings or problems. I feel like this is really a creative way that they can express their feelings, even if they don't know how to or what to draw, just doodle something on paper. And not only does it make me feel better and I hope like whoever tries, it helps them."

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'DOODLING' PROCESS — Her grandma's powerful source of illuminating inspiration has empowered Lua to explore a world of imagination which she creates with a pencil and sketchbook.

SPORTS SEASON

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is that the information authorizes Yakima County's advancement to Phase 2, enacting the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association's (WIAA) Return to Play plan, Dave Martinez, director of student life and athletics reported during an interview on Wednesday, Feb 3.

"We've figured out how to safely allow the practices to happen on our campus and so we can do the same thing when we get the opportunity to have sports," Martinez said.

Each region must meet three out of the four metrics in order to advance: a 10% decreasing trend in case rates over a two-week period; a 10% decrease in coronavirus hospital admission rates in that same timeframe; an ICU occupancy rate that's less than 90%; and a test positivity rate of less than 10%.

Grizzly sports teams have been conducting voluntary workouts while following evolving DOH and Yakima Health District (YHD) safety protocols since last October. Athletes and coaches confidently believe new COVID-19 data will allow them to finally have a competitive season and culminating event.

"I'm praying to God that we're going to have a season. And hopefully that carries on to wrestling," SHS sophomore Mateo Armandariz declared. The defensive tackle had his helmet in hand and is more than ready to receive his pads once football practice and the season officially begins.

A new SHS athletics' website has been created for the posting of the fall sports schedules, along with current and comprehensive program information which can be found at www.sunnysidegrizzlies.com. The site is being updated as information becomes available.

WIAA season 1 will consist of low-risk cross country and girls swim, moderate-risk slow pitch softball, girls soccer, and volleyball. Football is the only high-risk sport in the fall season.

The return of the Class of 2021 has been an optimistic shot in the arm and with the upcoming sports season 1 of fall athletics, there's a new energy on campus which is spreading in a positive direction.

"Oh, my gosh, it feels so good to have kids in our school! It reminded me of that first practice, you hear talking and laughing and we're doing the small group work of eight to 10 in a classroom and the internet is really good and they get access to that. And they're seeing friends and the mask part is where we are right now and our kids are doing it," Martinez conveyed.

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