

High School Essay
Honorable Mention

The Struggle Is Real
By Grace McGuire, Walt Whitman High School

I always hate coming home from school on Friday, because Friday is my hungry day. After a long week of learning, all I want is food. But I usually come home to a fridge as empty as my math teacher's test review sessions. Well, the fridge isn't completely empty, but there is nothing in there that I actually want to eat. On one particular Friday, my options were a bag of arugula, an expired peach yogurt and a quarter gallon of skim milk. Such are the trials of a Bethesda teenager with two working parents who have not discovered that Peapod delivers.

My 93-year-old grandma calls arugula "rocket" because it grew so fast on her childhood farm. I have never grown arugula, so I don't know if this is true, but I do know that it tastes like rocket fuel. The thought of eating these stringy, bitter greens leaves me cold and I usually pass on the weeds masquerading as food.

I would eat peach yogurt in a heartbeat, except I avoid foods that are more than a day or two past the expiration date. In our fridge, the yogurt usually has been hanging out for a while. My mom hates that I care so much about when food expires; whenever she sees me check an expiration date, she lectures, "I would never try to *deliberately* poison you." My issue here is the word "deliberately," as I think back to a memorable New Year's Eve episode involving some expired frozen shrimp.

In my house we drink milk like water, so we usually are down to a few sips by Friday. No way I could finish off the milk, because we must make sure our parents have enough for their Saturday morning coffee. Everyone gets their share of the last quarter gallon, which in my case is usually none.

But then I noticed it: a small clear plastic container in the back corner of the fridge, hidden behind the milk. My heart filled with hope as I reached to investigate this potential treasure. "Raspberries!" I realized.

But, on the container was a note that read: "Do not eat! Saving for cocktails." "Cocktails" when I am on the verge of starvation? Usually I would have obeyed the note, but today I was too upset. I deserved the raspberries; if no one left any food for me, why should I save food for them? I opened the container, picked one up and brought it towards my mouth. But, then I changed my mind.

I did not eat the raspberries because I realized how selfish I was being. I was thinking no one cared for me when there were so many clear signs that this was not true. I realized how grateful I should be for what I have, and that I should be more understanding of my working parents. Also, I do not even like raspberries that much. But if they had been strawberries